NEW

Dark History of the USA

DISCOVER THE SLAUGHTER, SCANDALS AND SECRETS BURIED BEHIND THE STARS AND STRIPES

ATOMIC
TESTING GROUNDS
LAS VEGAS, NEV.
Miss Atomic Bomb
1957

INCLUDING • Louisiana Voodoo • New England Vampires • The KKK
California Genocide • Evil Experiments • Satanic Panic! • Cults • Serial Killers

Digital Edition
FUTURE
FIRST EDITION

Welcome

Despite being barely 250 years old, the United States of America has had a rather traumatic tenure. Its star-spangled banner is tarnished by prejudice, stained with blood and soaked in superstition. Delve into America's checkered past and explore the fearsome frontier, the failings of the Founding Fathers and centuries of systemic and violent racism. Discover the moral panics, mass murders, acts of terror, accidental disasters and state-sanctioned abuses suffered by thousands of unsuspecting American citizens. Learn the horrific historic realities of living in the "Land of the Free" they probably never taught you about in school.

CONTENTS

6 Controversies of the Founding Fathers
Scandals casting shadows over the nation's architects

10 Weird Wild West
Ten bizarre tales from America's frontier

16 Better Dying Through Chemistry: Embalming & War
How embalming boomed during the Civil War

22 The New England Vampire Panic
Did the dead drain the living in the 19th century?

32 Welcome to the Wicked West
Killers that struck fear into the hearts of the pioneers

38 Origins of Louisiana Voodoo
The truth behind an often misunderstood religion

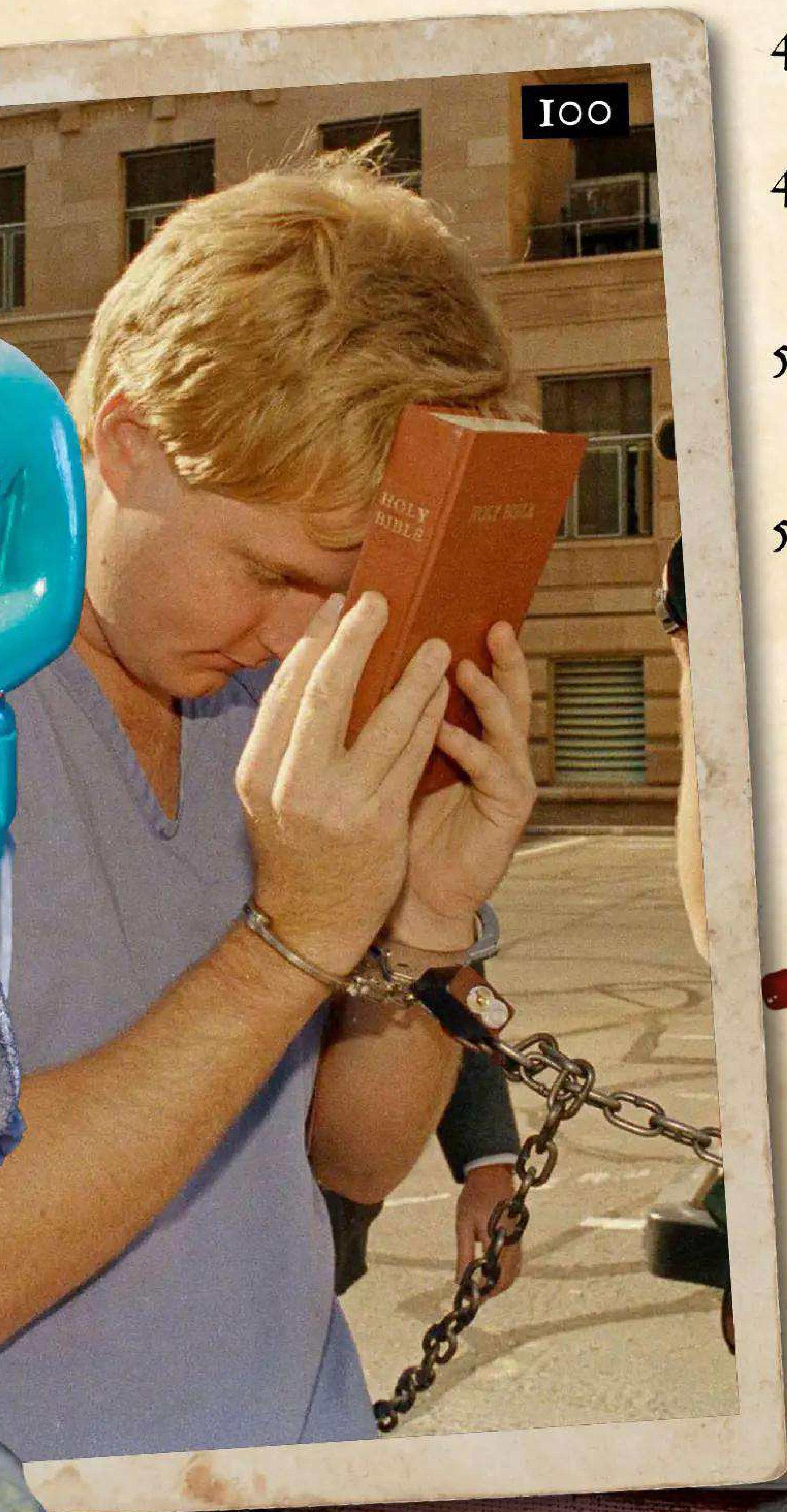
44 Spiritualism
How post-Civil War America was captivated by ghosts

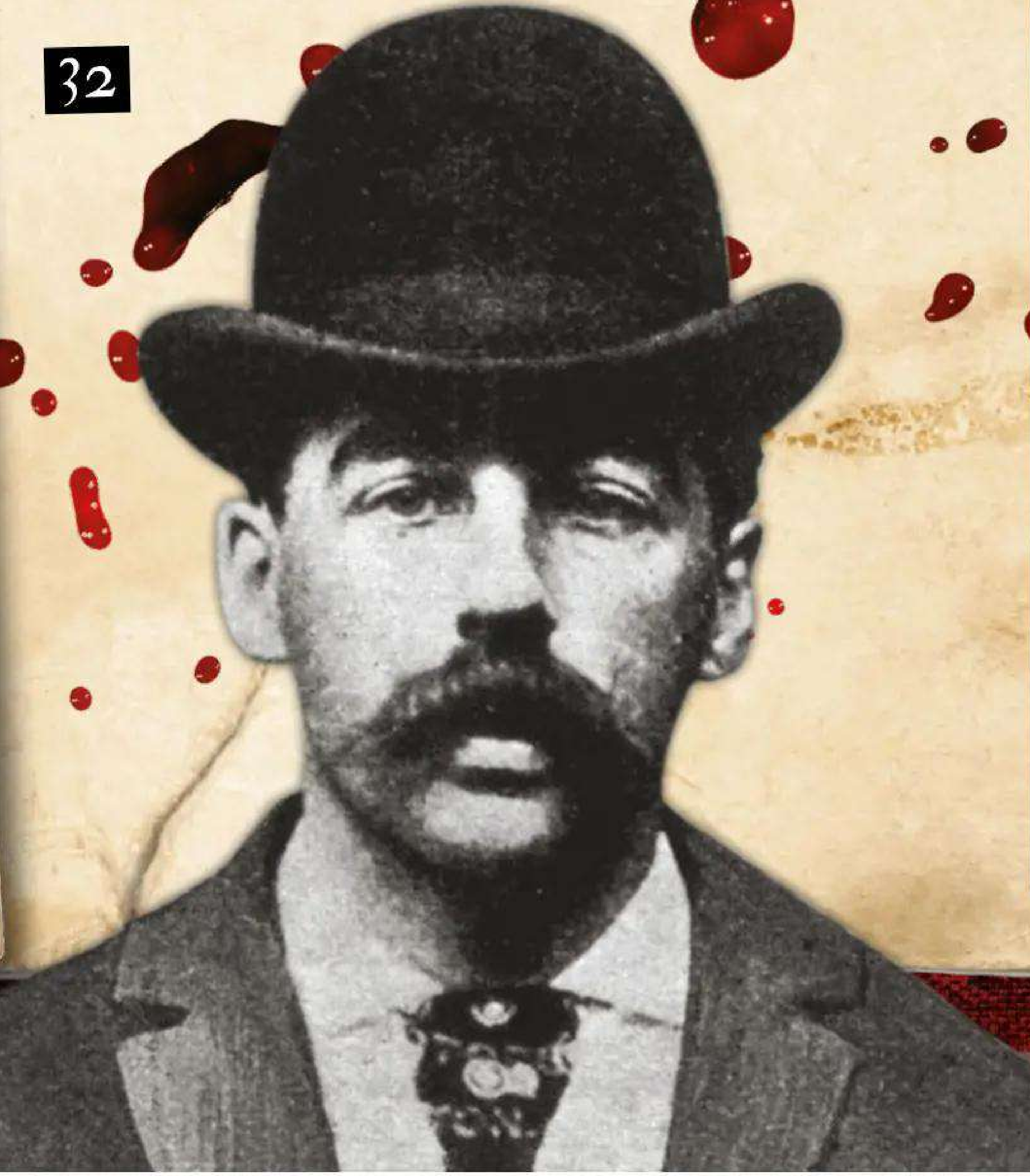
46 The California Genocide
One of the worst state-sanctioned campaigns of violence against Native Americans

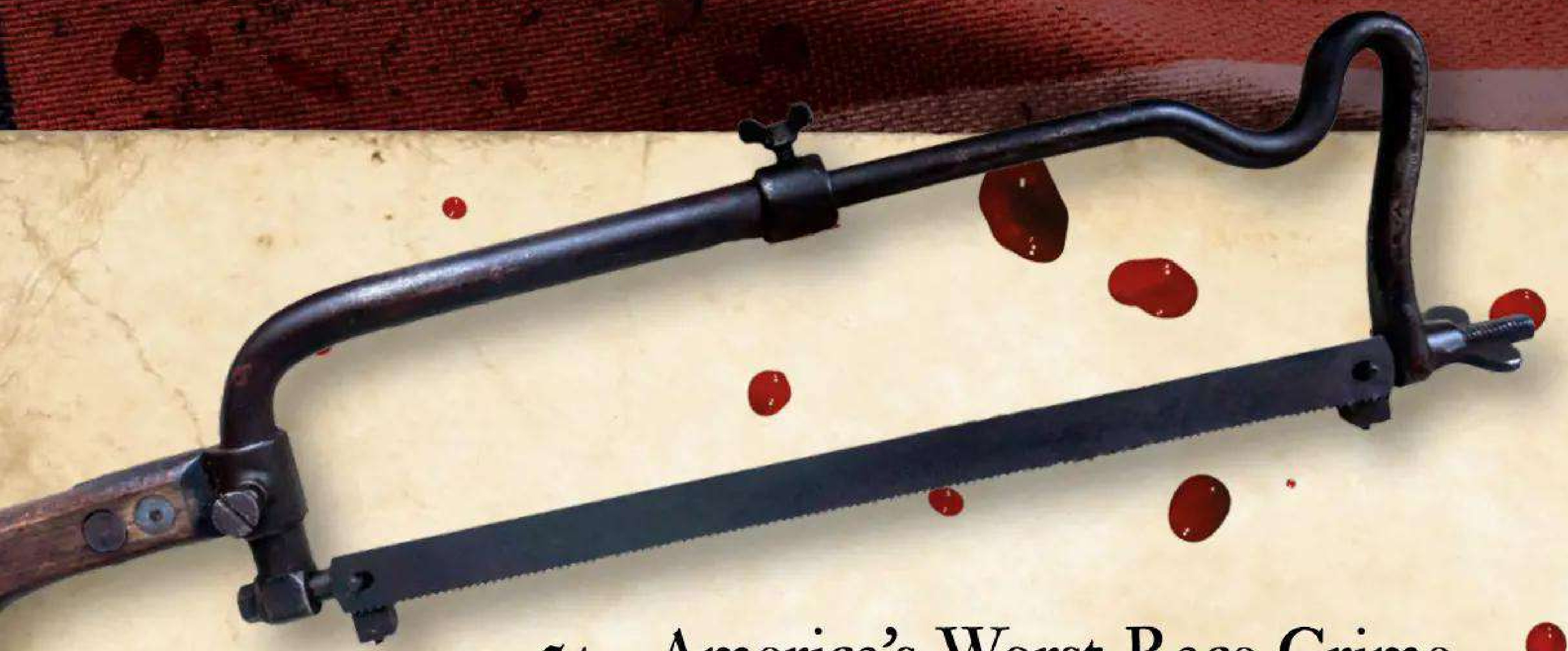
50 Indigenous Schools
The forced segregation, abuse and indoctrination of American Indian children

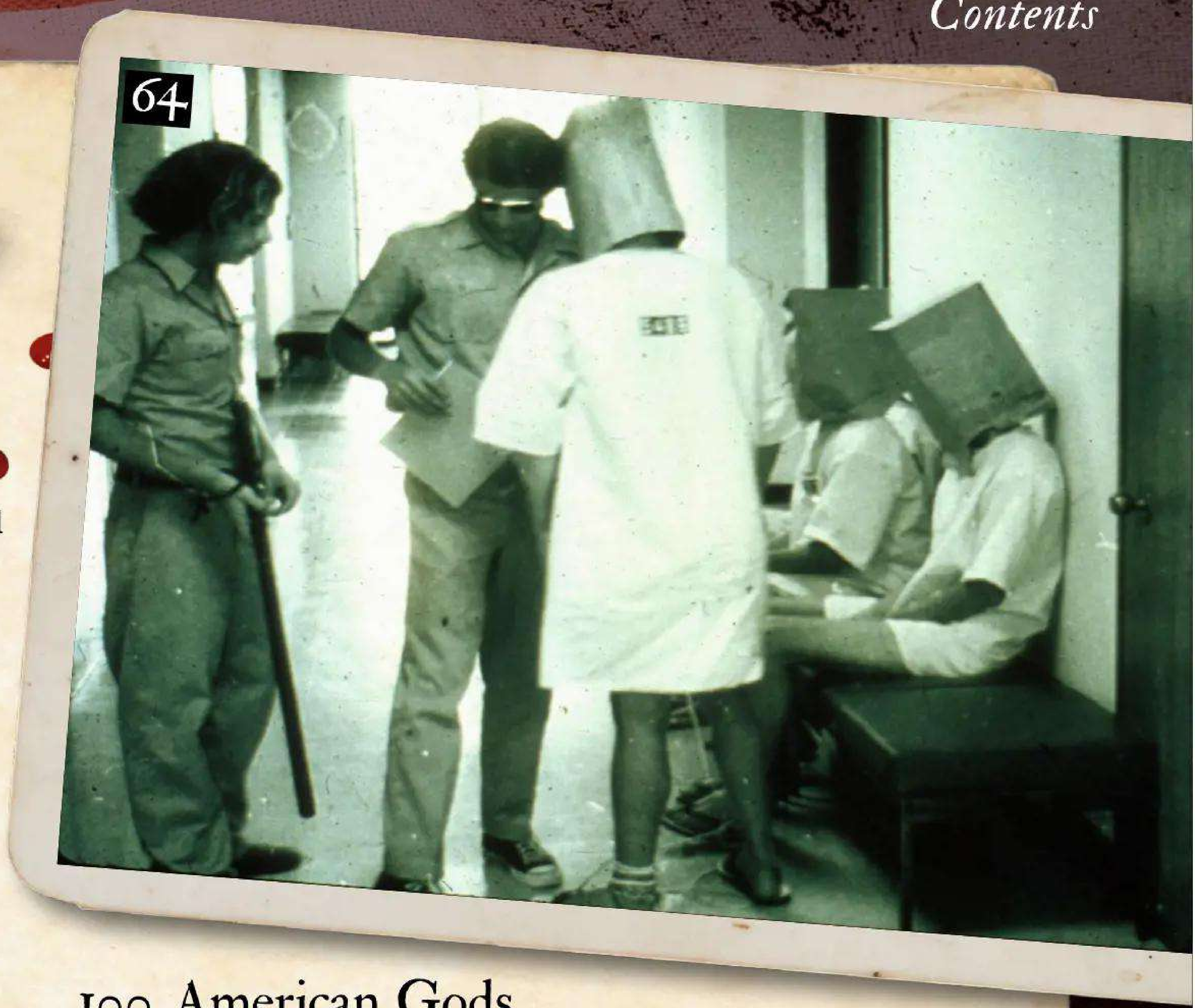
52 The LA Chinatown Massacre
The 1871 brutal mob attack remains the bloodiest assault against Asian Americans in US history

38
LORDEDAMORTE









54 America's Worst Race Crime
How Tulsa's "Black Wall Street" was violently burned to the ground

60 The Ku Klux Klan
The worst atrocities inflicted by America's most notorious white supremist hate group

64 Evil Experiments
Some of the most diabolical examples of human experimentation in US history

72 Welcome to Atomic City
When watching nuclear bombs detonate was one of Las Vegas' lead attractions

78 Inside the Death House
Enter Sing Sing Prison's execution facility and you'll be leaving in a body bag

84 Innocent Suspects
The plight of Japanese Americans following the WWII attack on Pearl Harbour

80 The Lavender Scare
The Red Scare's impact on the LGBTQIA+ community

94 Hunting Season
Between 1970 and 1990, the US saw a peak in serial killer activity and some of its most notorious criminals

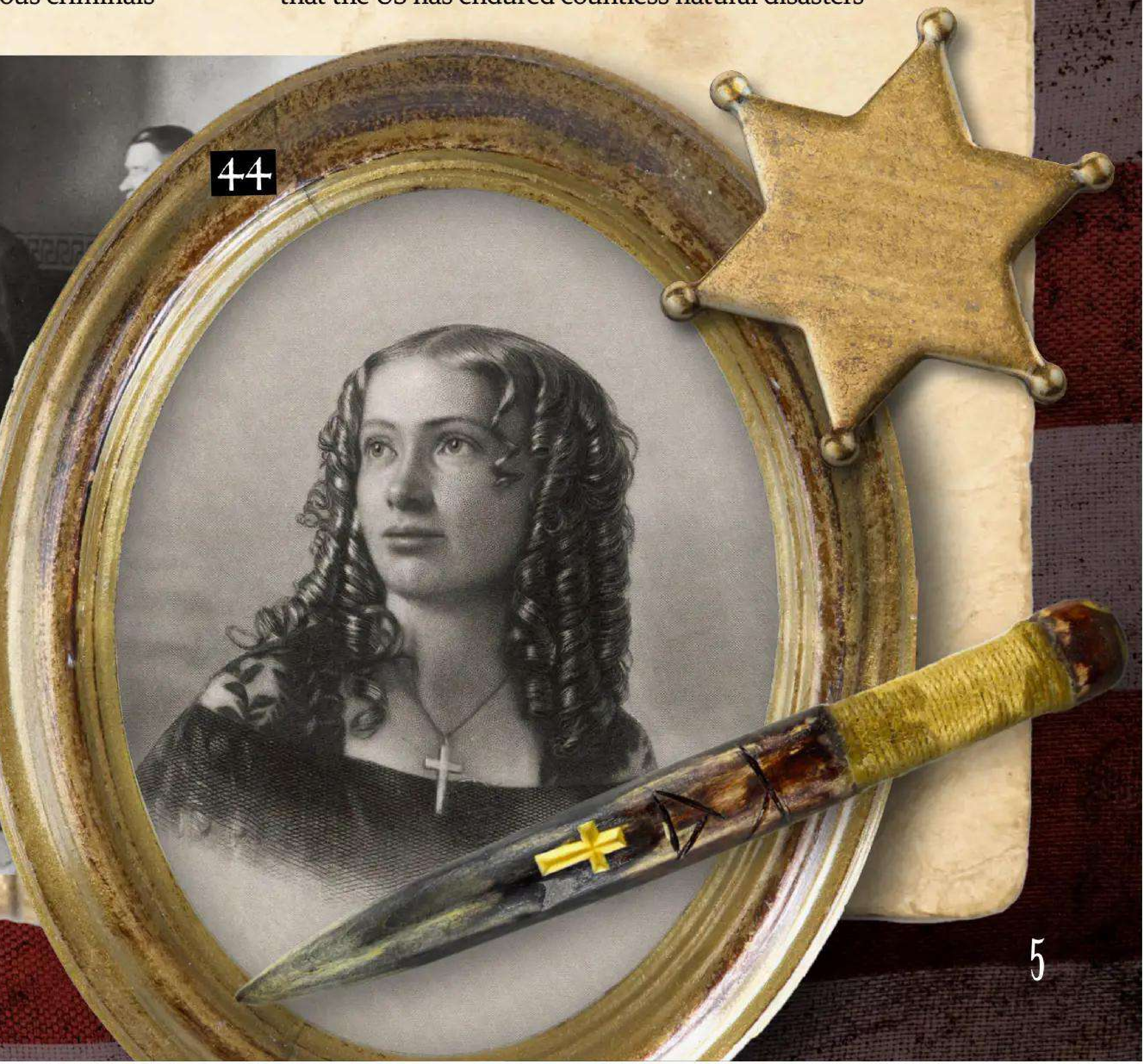
100 American Gods
Some of the United States' most terrifying cults

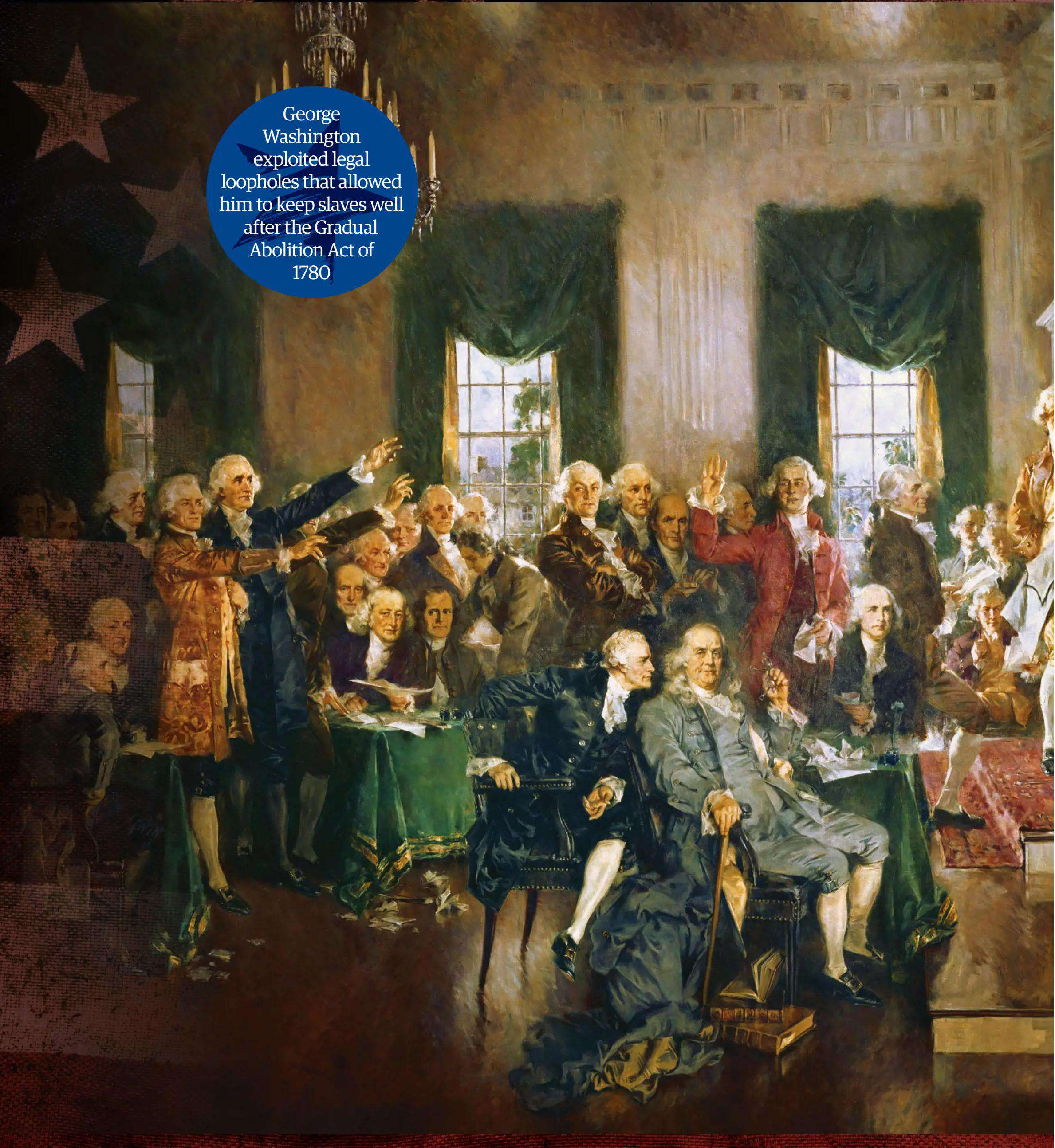
108 Satanic Panic!
Social hysteria during the 1980s and 90s claimed more innocent victims than the Devil ever has

114 Casualties of the Constitution
The Second Amendment remains controversial, and gun ownership has contributed to many fatalities

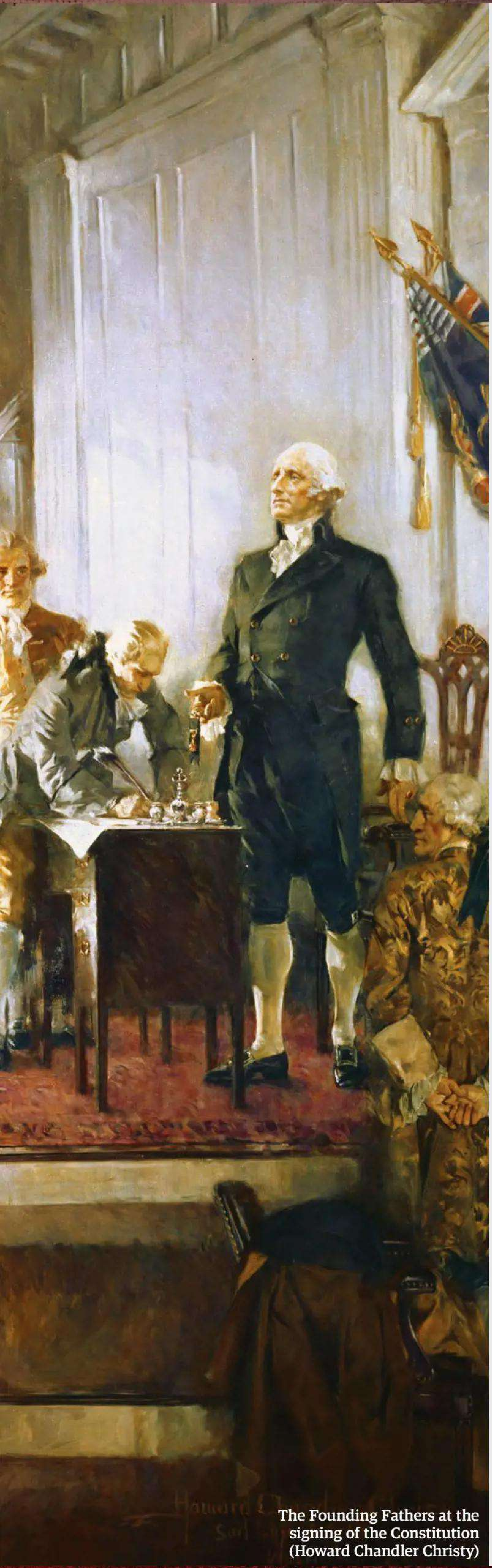
120 Blood on the Streets
Americans have been victim to a number of large-scale accidents and attacks that have shaped their nation

126 The Wrath of Mother Nature
With such a vast and varied landscape, its no surprise that the US has endured countless natural disasters





George Washington exploited legal loopholes that allowed him to keep slaves well after the Gradual Abolition Act of 1780



The Founding Fathers at the signing of the Constitution (Howard Chandler Christy)

Controversies of the Founding Fathers

While their achievements were extraordinary, the Founding Fathers weren't right about everything. On some issues, their judgement was lacking

To many Americans the Founding Fathers are akin to gods, patriotically romanticised as legendary freedom heroes. But America's forefathers weren't divine beings, they were humans who were just as fallible and prone to error as any other man. Despite their revolutionary ideals of liberty and freedom for all, the Founding Fathers compromised heavily on these beliefs when carving out the Constitution, as well as within their personal lives. The US Constitution famously begins with three words: "We the people" – indicating that the United States government exists to serve its citizens, first and foremost. But, the definition of "people" at the time exclusively referred to propertied white men, leading to charter failing a significantly large percentage of the population of the United States – namely African Americans, Indigenous peoples and women.

The Founding Fathers failed to make slavery a national issue. While many of the Founders – including Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay – were in favour of emancipation, the opportunity to outlaw slavery from the central government was not taken, and the issue was instead left to be decided state-by-state, on an individual basis. On top of this, they agreed to the Constitutional Compromise of 1787. Also known as the Three-Fifths Compromise this agreement legally established slavery in the foundations of the government, dictating that a slave – despite having no rights – counted as three-fifths of a person when determining a state's total population. Therefore, the more slaves a state had, the more seats and power they held in government. This essentially politically incentivised the growth of slavery in the Southern States.

The issue was distorted due to slavery's importance to the American economy, particularly in the Southern states where slaves formed the crucial labour forces needed on plantations. In 1790 there were over half a million slaves in the South. There were nearly 4 million by 1860. While the importation of slaves became illegal in 1808, the law went unenforced, and hundreds of thousands of slaves continued to be brought into the country. The system was so entrenched that it took the Civil War to bring it to an end.

But even with the Confederacy's defeat in 1865, freed African Americans still faced prejudice and violence from the entrenched racism of the South. The so-called 'Black Codes' and Jim Crow segregationist laws of the subsequent decades can all arguably be traced back to the time when the Founding Fathers failed to make good on the claim that all America's citizens are equal under the law.

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The Curious Case of Benjamin Franklin

An eccentric "Renaissance Man", Franklin was prone to scandal

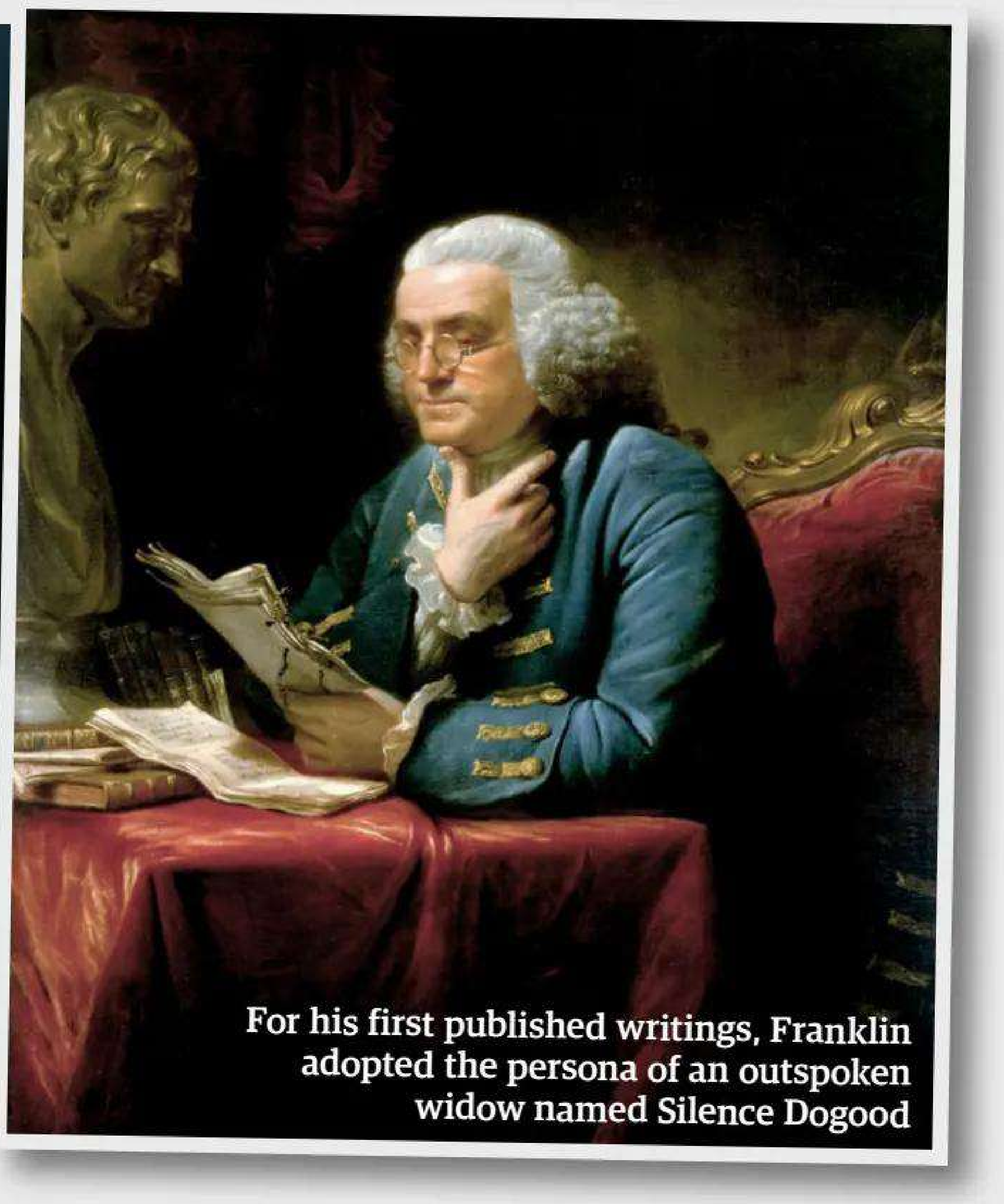
Benjamin Franklin played a crucial role in achieving American independence but the way he chose to live his life left many of his contemporaries clutching their pearls.

Franklin was a talented writer who penned numerous salacious and satirical essays. His most infamous scribbling is the 1745 provocative letter *Advice to a Friend on Choosing a Mistress*. Deemed obscene, the essay advocated for sexual relations with older women over younger ladies. In 1782, Franklin authored a lurid fake news article indicating scalps were being sent to the King of England, hoping to sway public opinion against British forces. The hoax proved effective but perpetuated damaging sterotypes of Indigenous people.

A known womaniser, Franklin abandoned his wife to reside in London for almost two decades and wouldn't return, even when she was in ill-health. He also fathered an illigitimate son the year they were wed. During his time in England, Franklin was allegedly a member of the notorious Hellfire Club – an elite, exclusive group of libertines accused of performing Black Magic who gathered to drink, gamble and fornicate in a series of old tunnels in Buckinghamshire known as The Hellfire Caves. An alcove inside one of the tunnels subsequently earned the title "Franklin's Cave".

When Franklin's London townhouse was renovated in 1998, workers discovered human remains in the basement. As it turned out, Franklin had allowed his friend, anatomist William Hewson, to use the space to illegally dissect bodies for medical research.

Among Franklin's worst offenses is the fact that he ran "for sale" ads for slaves in his newspaper (as well as owning them). He later became a staunch abolitionist, petitioning Congress to end slavery.


For his first published writings, Franklin adopted the persona of an outspoken widow named Silence Dogood

John Adams was the only president of America's first five that did not hold any slaves

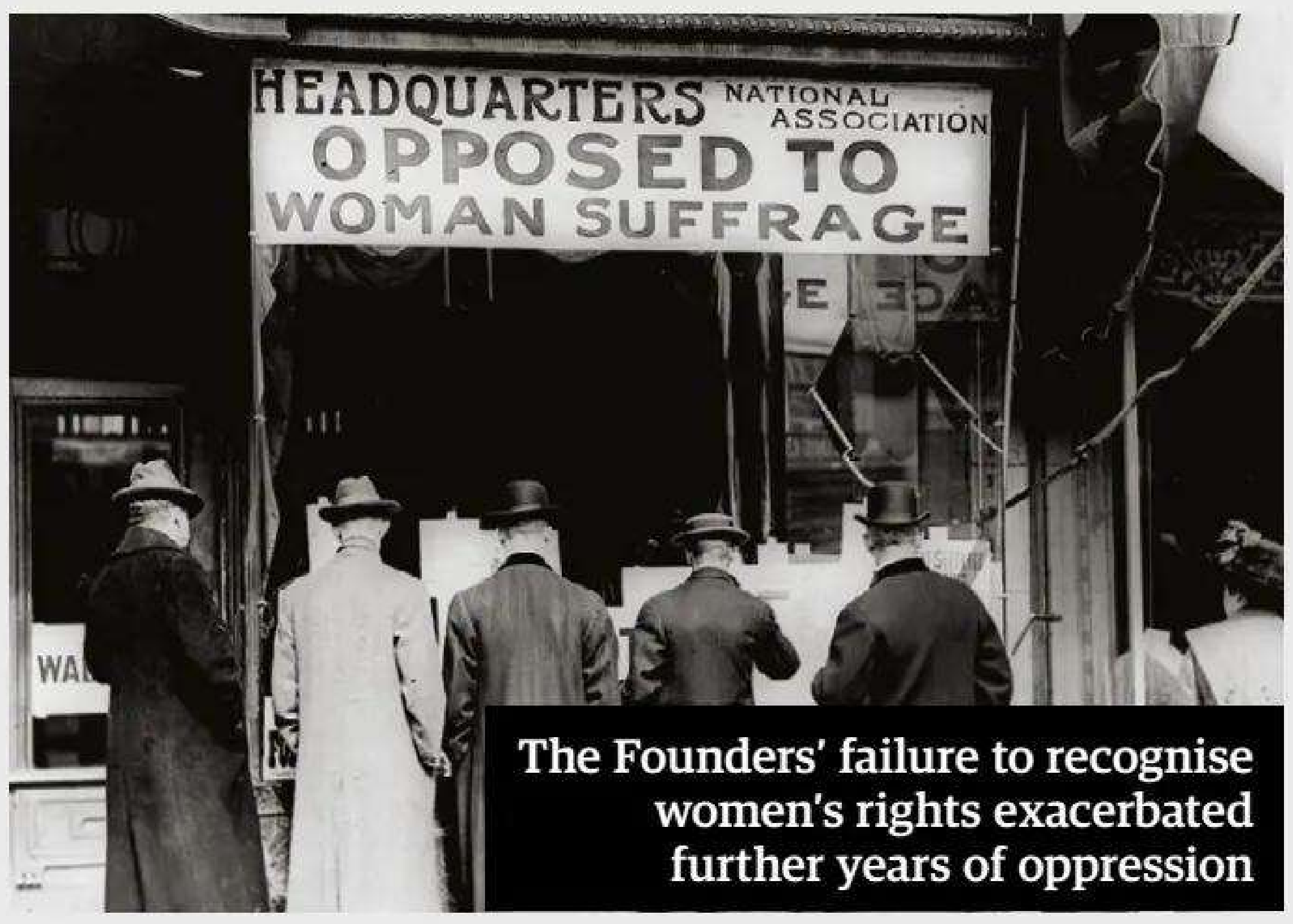
Similarly, and with few exceptions, the Founding Fathers did little to recognise the rights of Native Americans. While some tribes had been in favour of and fought towards the Founders' vision of a new, independent United States, others had remained loyal to the colonial British. In 1779, George Washington ordered punishment attacks on Native American villages, making no distinction between those who had been American allies and those who hadn't.

In 1787, the Constitution gave Congress the power "to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes", and Washington, while describing Natives as "like the wild beasts of the forest," advocated for the legal purchase of Indian land rather than its being taken by force. Various treatises were signed over the following years, but there remained an uneasy tension, with Indigenous issues being treated as matters of foreign policy in congress: the Native Americans were essentially always viewed by the European settlers as aliens in their own land.

As a federation of semi-independent allies, the organisation of the Iroquois Nation – comprising the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora tribes – was an obvious precedent for the government system the Founders would adopt (some have even called the flag of the Iroquois the "first draft of the Constitution"). But the Founders preferred to claim Classical antiquity as inspiration.

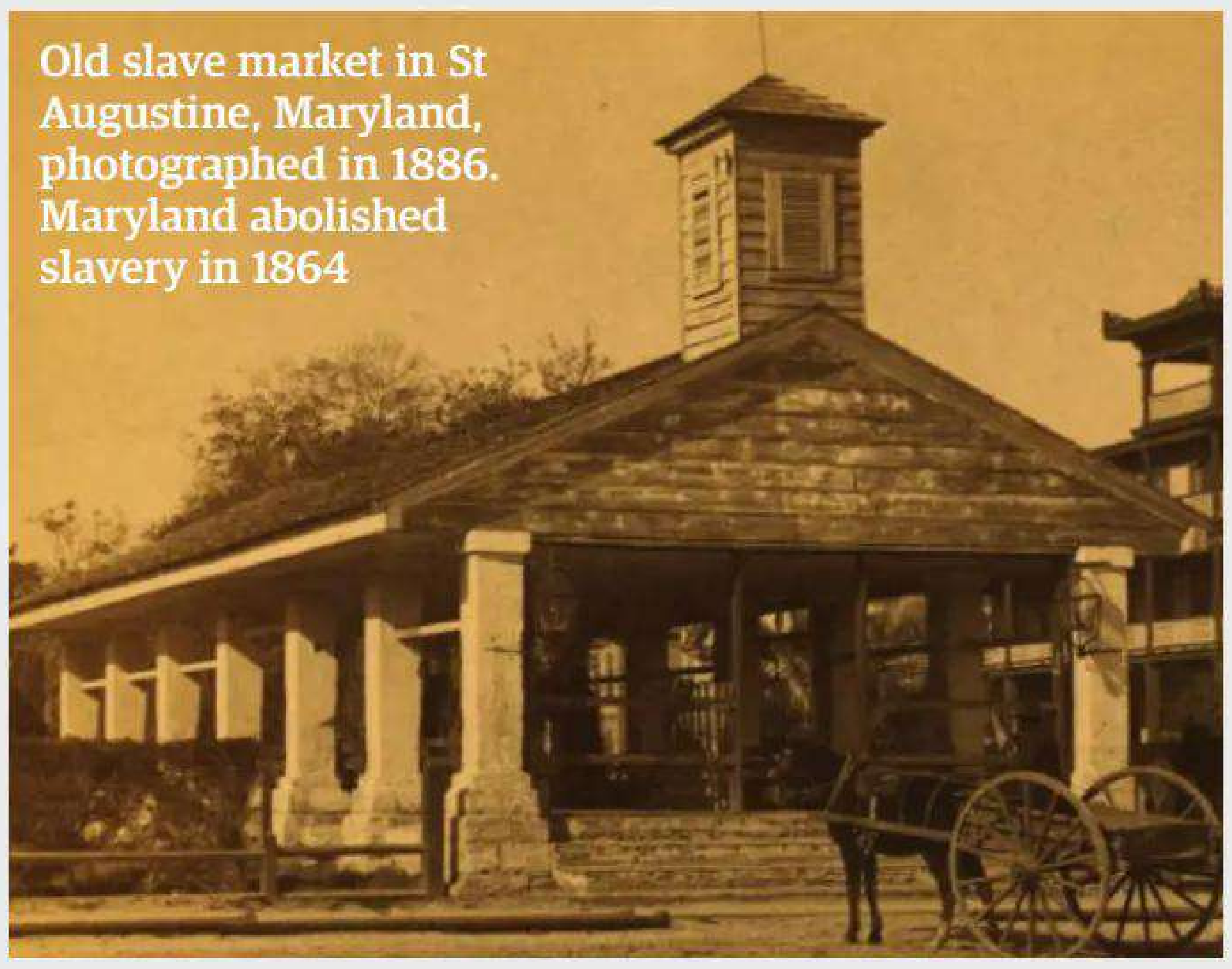
Washington assured the Cherokee that all treatises would be honoured in perpetuity, but ultimately his promise was not kept. By 1830, the numbers of white settlers desiring to move into Indian-occupied territory, and the clamour of their demands, prompted the US government to take drastic action in favour of its electorate. The solution arrived at under the presidency of Andrew Jackson was the Indian Removal Act, which uprooted five entire tribes from their lands in the Deep South of America and displaced them hundreds of kilometres to new territories further west. Thousands died without seeing the end point of their arduous and unjust journey. Only in 1924 were Native Americans judged automatically to be US Citizens without having to apply.

While the Founding Fathers didn't specifically deny women the right to vote, they also didn't go out of their way to make that right enshrined in law. As with slavery, the issue was delegated from



The Founders' failure to recognise women's rights exacerbated further years of oppression

Slaves on the plantation of the Confederate General Thomas F Drayton, South Carolina 1862


Old slave market in St Augustine, Maryland, photographed in 1886. Maryland abolished slavery in 1864

The Founders enshrined the right to bear arms, which in 1793 looked like this musket

> *"As with slavery, the issue was delegated from the centre to the individual states to decide for themselves"*

the centre to the individual states to decide for themselves. All decided that women were not eligible to be given public and political voice (New Jersey was briefly an exception, but revoked the rights in 1807).

The first ten amendments to the Constitution, making up 1791's Bill of Rights, still did not address the issue. In the first half of the 19th century, most state legislatures saw suffrage bills introduced at one time or another, but few even came to a vote and most were simply disregarded. The 14th amendment of 1868, dealing with citizenship rights, was in much later years interpreted as giving women extensive rights, but was not read that way at the time (in fact the Supreme Court officially ruled that it should not be read that way in 1875). It was not until 1920 that the 19th Amendment made it unconstitutional and illegal to deny US citizens the right to vote on the basis of gender.

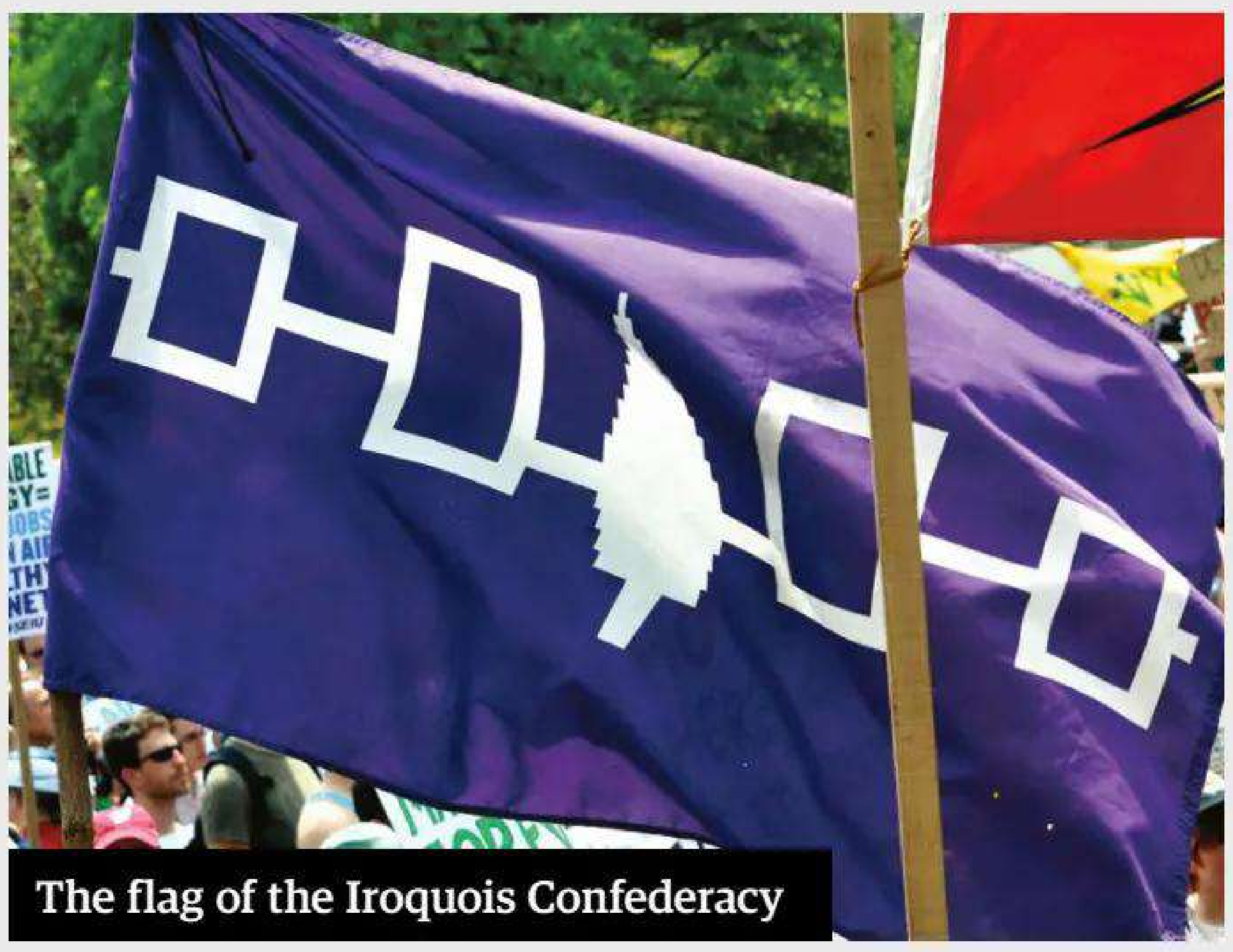
First introduced in Congress in 1878, it took 41 years for the 19th amendment to be made law throughout the United States: a period known as 'the doldrums', when the women's suffrage movement gained few victories. Even then, it was only ratified by the necessary 36 state legislatures. The 1920 Presidential Election was the first in which women in every state could legally vote, but it would be further decades before every US state officially ratified the amendment. Mississippi was the last holdout to bring its books up to date, incredibly, in 1984. Despite guaranteed voting entitlements for women, systemic gender inequalities still persist, even today.

The right for American citizens to bear arms has been another continuous source of controversy since its initial inclusion in the Bill of Rights. The pre-Bill of Rights draft of the Constitution had argued that the power to arm state militias should be moved from the individual states to the federal government. This immediately rang alarm bells among some of the Founders, who argued that the policy marked the start of a slippery downward slope towards government tyranny. As Noah Webster put it: "America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword [if] the whole body of the people are armed." Representatives of Southern states like Virginia, however, had more sinister motives for keeping guns in the hands of their constituents. 'Slave patrols' of white men keeping control of indentured African Americans would find it harder to do so if the organisation of local militias were outlawed.

Debate has continued over the precise wording of the Second Amendment: specifically regarding whether it applies to American citizens' individual or collective rights. Many argued that its clause stating that "a well regulated militia [is] necessary to the security of a free state" means that the Second Amendment does not apply to individuals, and only recognises the right of each state to arm its own militia. A second interpretation allows for some individual rights, but only for individuals actively participating in a state-organised militia.

The third interpretation - simply that an individual has the right to own guns - was officially ruled on by the US Supreme Court as late as 2010. But the issue of what kind of gun an individual has the right to own remains a hot topic of debate, especially today.

> George Washington's dentures were not wooden, as legend has it, but in part made from the real teeth of slaves



The flag of the Iroquois Confederacy

The Jefferson Controversy

Despite his claims, America's third president certainly couldn't have believed "all men are created equal"

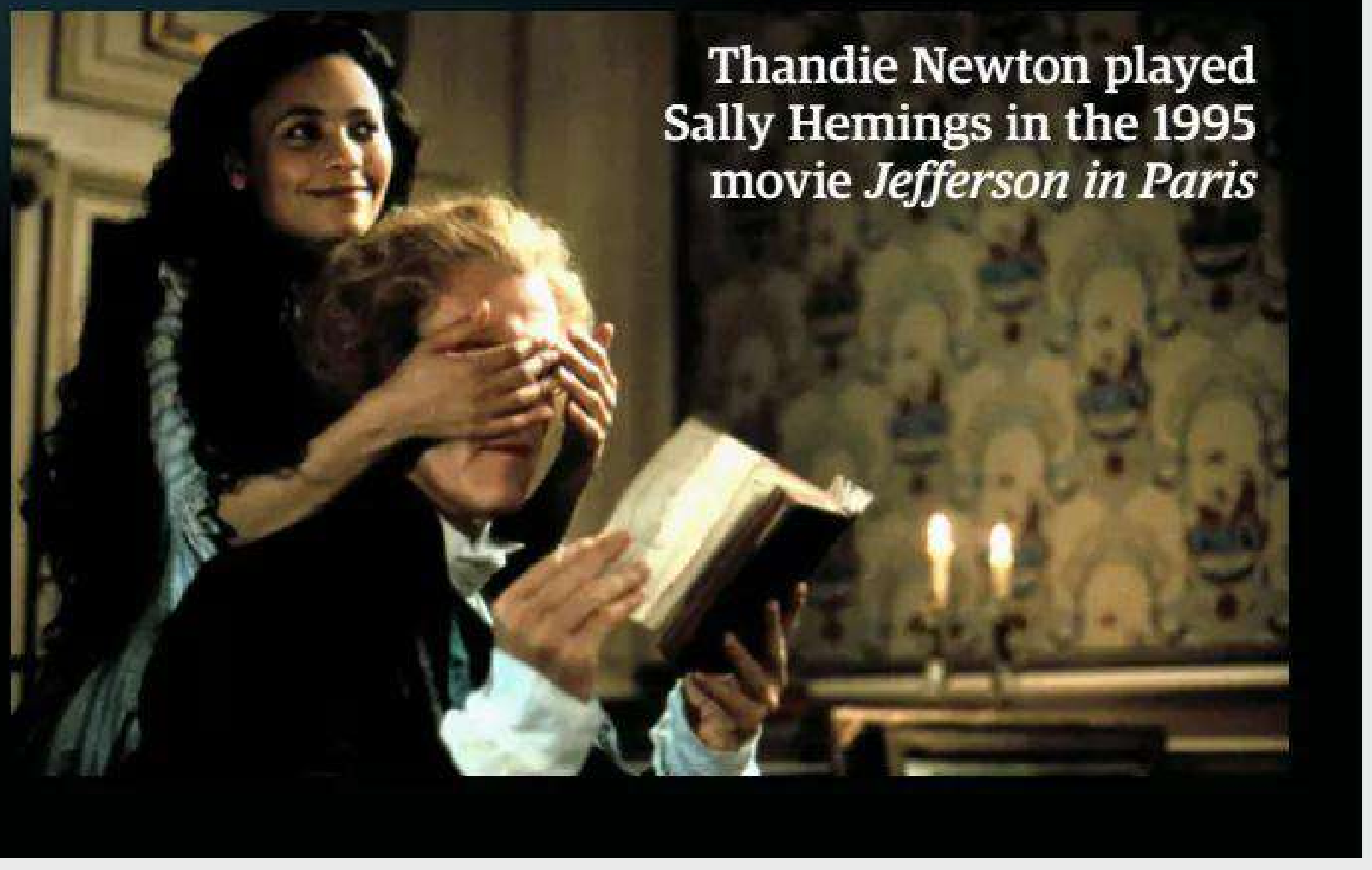
Despite dubbing the slave trade as a "hideous blot on the country", Thomas Jefferson soon changed his mind when he realised how much money he could make from it. He believed Black people were "as incapable as children", yet his Virginia estate, Monticello, was built and sustained by hundreds of enslaved African Americans and his nailery relied heavily on forced African American child labour. In the Founding Father's opinion, Blacks and Whites couldn't live together peacefully and deportation of freed Black people was an integral part of his emancipation scheme.

But perhaps his most notorious controversy was his relationship with his mixed-race slave Sally Hemings - the half-sister of his late wife, Martha Wayles.

In 1787, when she was a 14-years-old, Hemings accompanied Jefferson's daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph to Paris, where she resided for 26 months. It was during this time that an affair began with the middle-aged Jefferson. At age 16, Hemings conceived a baby with the Founding Father and negotiated the promise of freedom for her future children and "extraordinary privileges" in order to return to Virginia. The baby died shortly after birth, but Hemings bore five more children with Jefferson, with four - Beverly, Harriet, Madison and Eston - surviving into adulthood and eventually achieving emancipation.

The story first broke in 1802, with article by the *Richmond Recorder*, in a failed bid to tarnish Jefferson's reputation in the run-up to the presidential elections. Years later, more rumours emerged. In 1873, Madison revealed Jefferson was his father and a short time later Jefferson's nephew, Peter Carr, claimed paternity of most of Hemings' children. However, many noted that more than one child resembled Jefferson and all of Hemings' children were conceived during periods when he was present at the Monticello estate.

It wasn't until 1998 that DNA evidence confirmed the long-held suspicions - Hemings' children almost certainly belonged to the Jefferson family. For Jefferson's admirers, this proved that he was not as racist as many thought, interpreting it as a sweet, forbidden love affair. However, Hemings was only one quarter African and often described as having a "mighty near white" appearance. Conversely, his detractors have used the evidence to suggest that Jefferson's disdain for African Americans led him to abuse Sally Hemings, exploiting the power dynamic as her master and her inability to refuse his demands. Hemings was never granted freedom by Jefferson, finally being emancipated after his death by his daughter Martha.



Thandie Newton played Sally Hemings in the 1995 movie *Jefferson in Paris*

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Wild Bill Hickok was one of the sharpest shooters in the West

WEIRD WILD WEST

From ghost trains to ghost bandits, Wild Bill Hickok to wild camels, here are ten strange stories from America's frontier

Written by Callum McKelvie and Alice Pattillo

In the 19th century, the young nation of America was growing fast and was well on its way to becoming the world power we know today. The acquisition of vast swathes of land in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 effectively doubled the size of the US, and included territory that now comprises 15 states, among them Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming. By the late 1860s, the end of the civil war and the growth of the railways led settlers to venture further into the new world than ever before. These rugged new territories (and later the period itself) came to be known as the Wild West.

This was a time of bandits, cattle rustlers and gunslingers. But if folklore is to be believed it was also a time of many curious happenings. These frontier lands were home to serial killers and even spectral apparitions. Some of these stories originated during the period, but others have formed over time and become all the stranger for the retelling.

The truth of many of these stories will perhaps never be known for certain. As with all folk tales and legends, they have been expanded upon and embellished throughout the decades since they first appeared. Nonetheless they are shining examples of the peculiar fascination this period holds, how the unknown can inspire the imagination, and of the many bizarre happenings that were said to have occurred in the Weird Wild West.

The Ghost Bandit of Six Mile Canyon

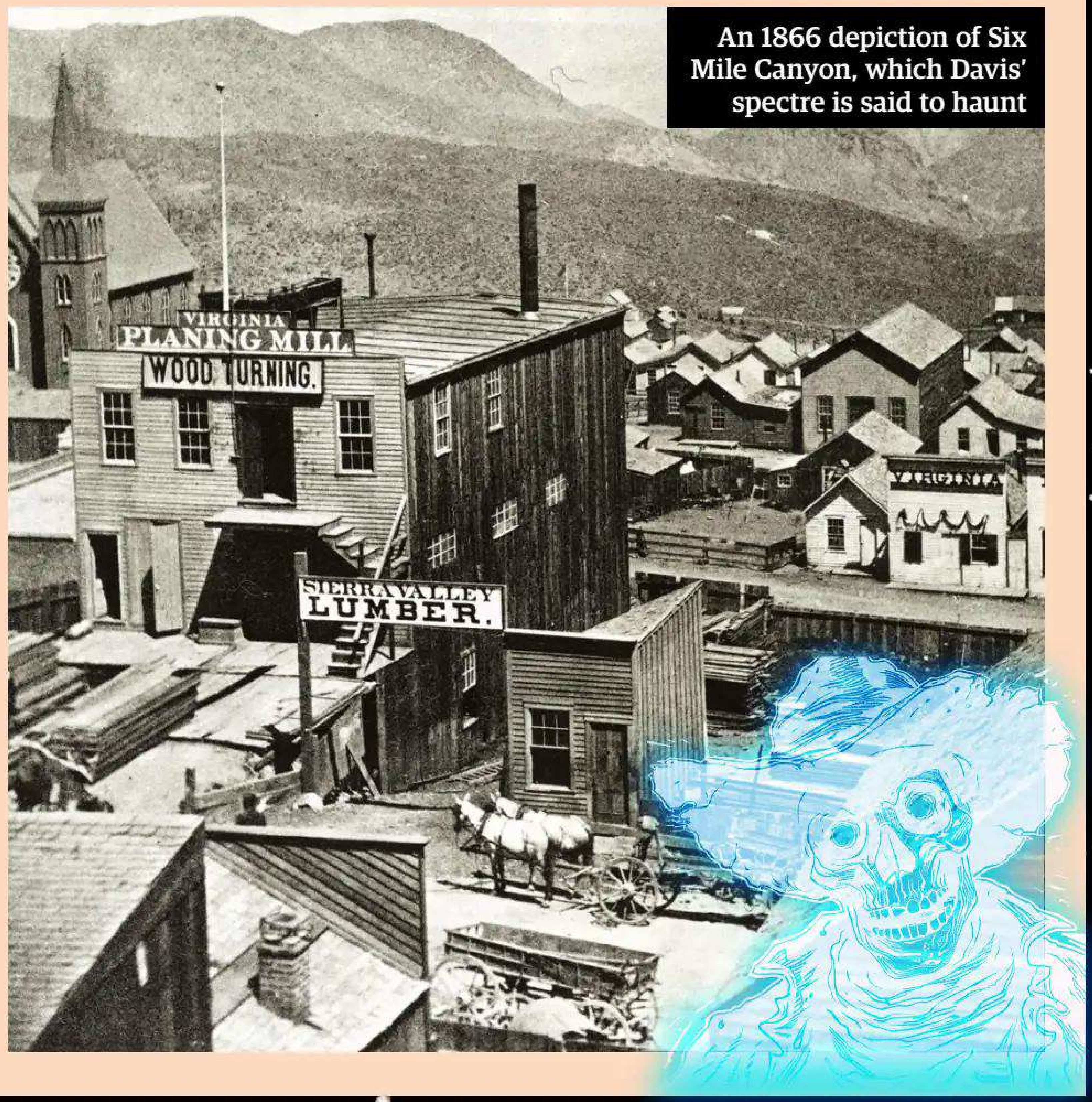
NEVADA

With a name that's better-suited to an episode of *Scooby-Doo*, The Ghost Bandit of Six Mile Canyon is said to be the returning spirit of train robber Big Jack Davis. His story is more eccentric than most, with the line between fact and fiction even harder to discern.

The story goes that Davis was a businessman who began operating a small bullion mill in Six Mile Canyon, Nevada, near Virginia City, some time in the 1850s or 60s. His business provided useful a cover when Davis began moonlighting as the leader of a gang of train robbers, allowing him to melt down the stolen gold and resell it legitimately. His most audacious heist was on the night of 5 November 1870, when his gang stole nearly $40,000 in currency.

Davis was eventually caught and sentenced to ten years in jail, but he only served five after informing on some of his fellow inmates who'd attempted to escape. After his release, Davis couldn't resist the lure of another heist, and on 13 September 1877 he was shot while attempting to rob a stagecoach.

Soon after his death the spooky stories began. There were rumours that Davis had hidden some of his gold and stolen loot somewhere in Six Mile Canyon. Over the years various groups of treasure hunters attempting to seeking out the loot reported to have witnessed a terrifying spectre. A 1977 edition of the *Nevada Appeal* newspaper's *Apple Tree* magazine reported that one such group was "frightened out of their wits at the sight of a gigantic and terrible apparition of some kind that suddenly came up out of the very ground on which they were working".



An 1866 depiction of Six Mile Canyon, which Davis' spectre is said to haunt

The Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine

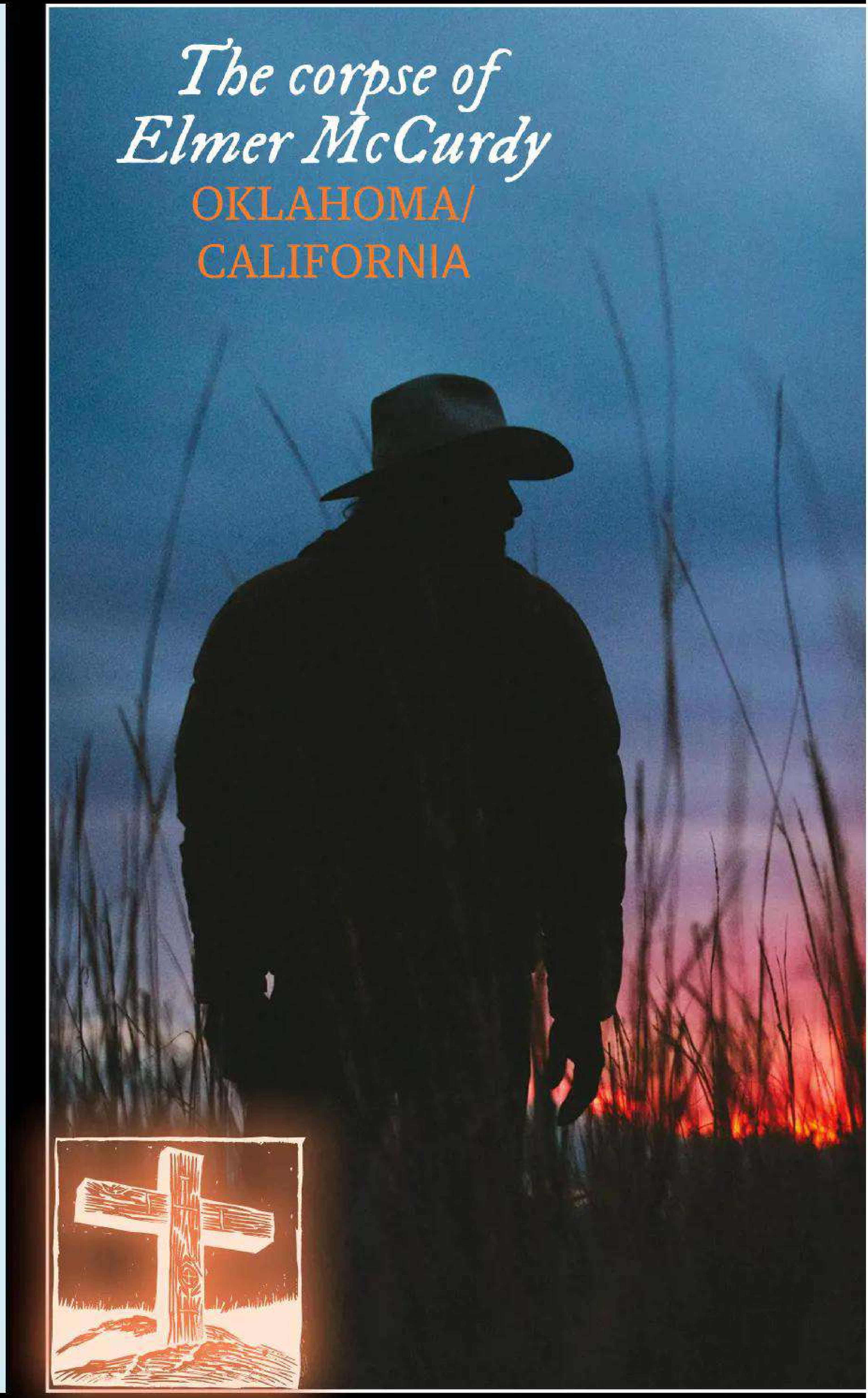
ARIZONA

There are numerous hidden pockets of precious metals rumoured to still lay unearthed beneath the desert landscapes of the Old West, but none are quite so famous as the lost gold mine of Jacob Waltz. A German immigrant ("Dutchman" derives from the German word "Deutsch"), Waltz purported to have discovered "the richest gold mine in the world" somewhere within the Superstition Mountains, believed to be near Apache Junction, east of Phoenix.

Thought to be the remnants of a mine built by Mexican family, the Peraltas, who abandoned it following an attack by Apaches during one of their attempts to transport the rich ore across the border, Waltz allegedly appealed to one of their descendants to learn its location. He and his partner, Jacob Weiser, worked the mine and kept a large store of gold caches within it, until another Apache attack left Jacob dead.

Upon his own deathbed, Waltz reputedly revealed a box of high-quality gold ore and uttered some vague clues about the location of the mine to his nurse, Julia Thomas – including that at four o'clock in the afternoon, the shadow of rock column Weaver's Needle falls directly into the entrance of the mine – but never revealed the exact coordinates to her. He claimed he'd been living off the cache for years, frequently returning to the rugged desert and coming away with large quantities of gold. Thomas sold everything to trek into the mountains but never found the mine.

Since 1892, multiple treasure seekers have ventured into the area of the Superstition Mountains now known as Lost Dutchman State Park, in hope of finding gold – only to leave empty-handed or be claimed by the wilderness' unforgiving terrain, leading to the legend being known as the Dutchman's Curse.



The corpse of Elmer McCurdy

OKLAHOMA/ CALIFORNIA

The mystery of the Shanghai Tunnels

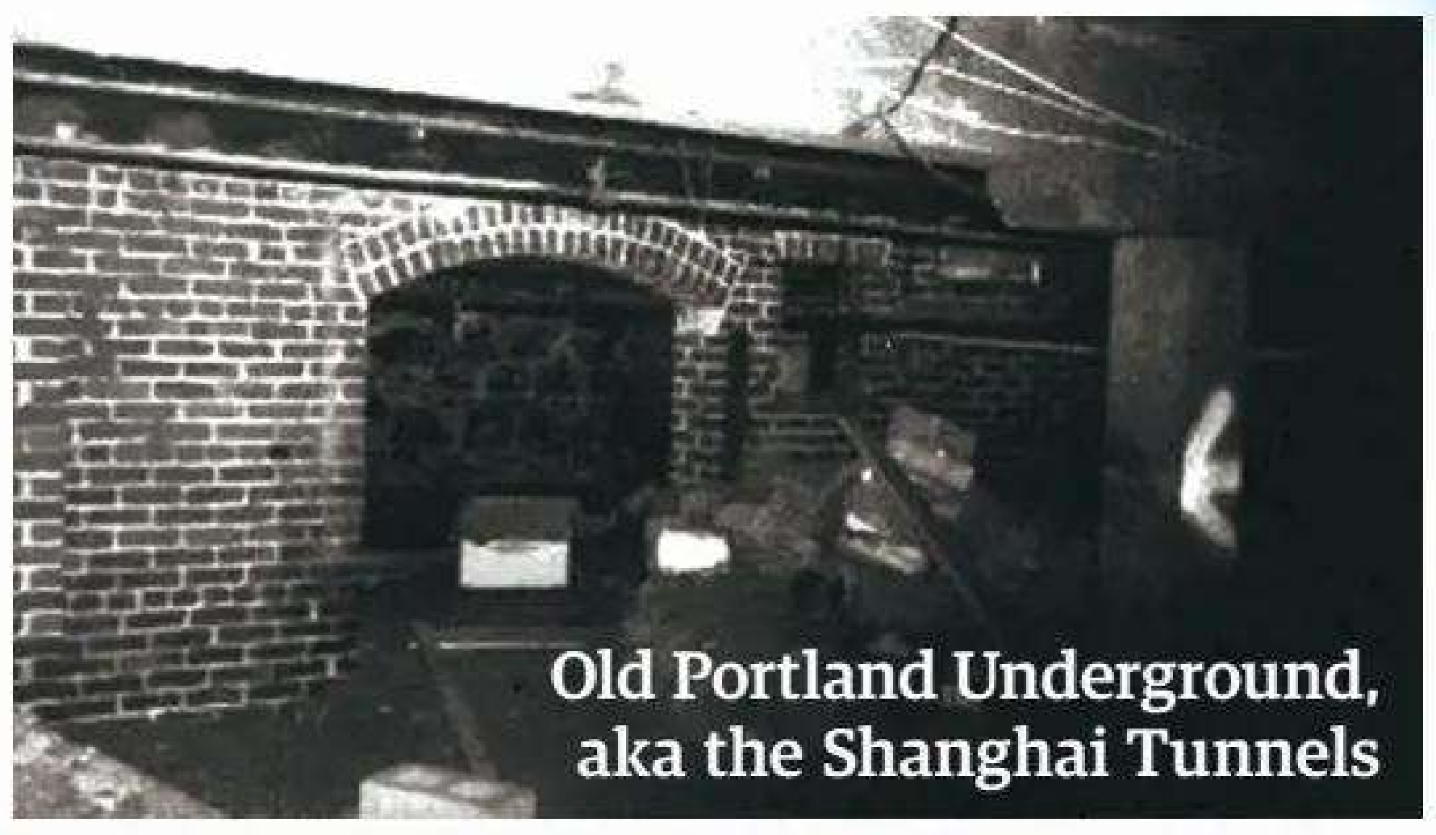
OREGON

In the 19th century a legend began to form that Portland Harbour was home to a disturbing secret. Stories circulated about a network of tunnels deep beneath the surface of the city that were being used to spirit away civilians from the city's bars and taverns and onto ships. Here they would be forced into labour in a practice known as 'shanghaiing', or 'crimping'.

These underground passages, also known as Old Portland Underground, were constructed so goods could be easily moved from the waterfront to the basement storage areas of shops and businesses. However, popular folklore states that unsuspecting revellers, whose drinks had been drugged, were hauled through these tunnels to ships in the harbour, only to awake at sea.

But how true are these tales? Despite their prevalence, they are somewhat dubious. The Oregon Historical society states that while "historians of the Old Town district have confirmed that shanghaiing and crimping occurred there, along with other criminal and unsavoury activities", little evidence can be found of it occuring in the tunnels.

Nonetheless there are tours offered of the tunnels where 'shanghaiing' allegedly took place – which are also said to be home to a number of ghosts. So those wishing to venture down into the dark can do so… if they dare.



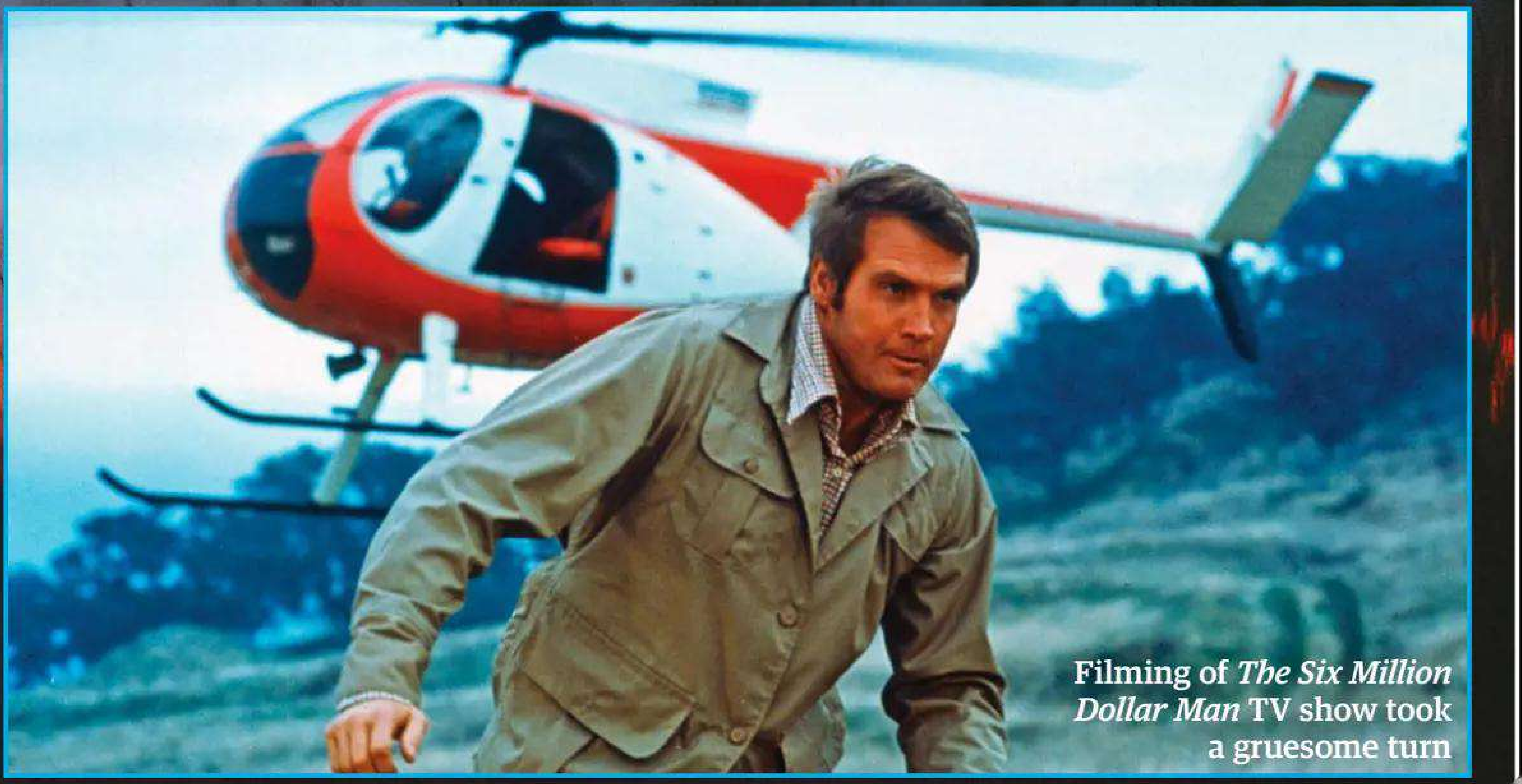
Old Portland Underground, aka the Shanghai Tunnels

The Wild West was filled with outlaws and criminals, and one of the most notorious was Elmer McCurdy, who met a sorry end in October 1911. McCurdy and his gang had robbed a train in Oklahoma, though their meagre haul – $45-worth of whiskey – was hardly worth the effort. Two days later McCurdy was hunted down and shot to death, and was seemingly destined to become just another bandit who paid the ultimate price for their crimes.

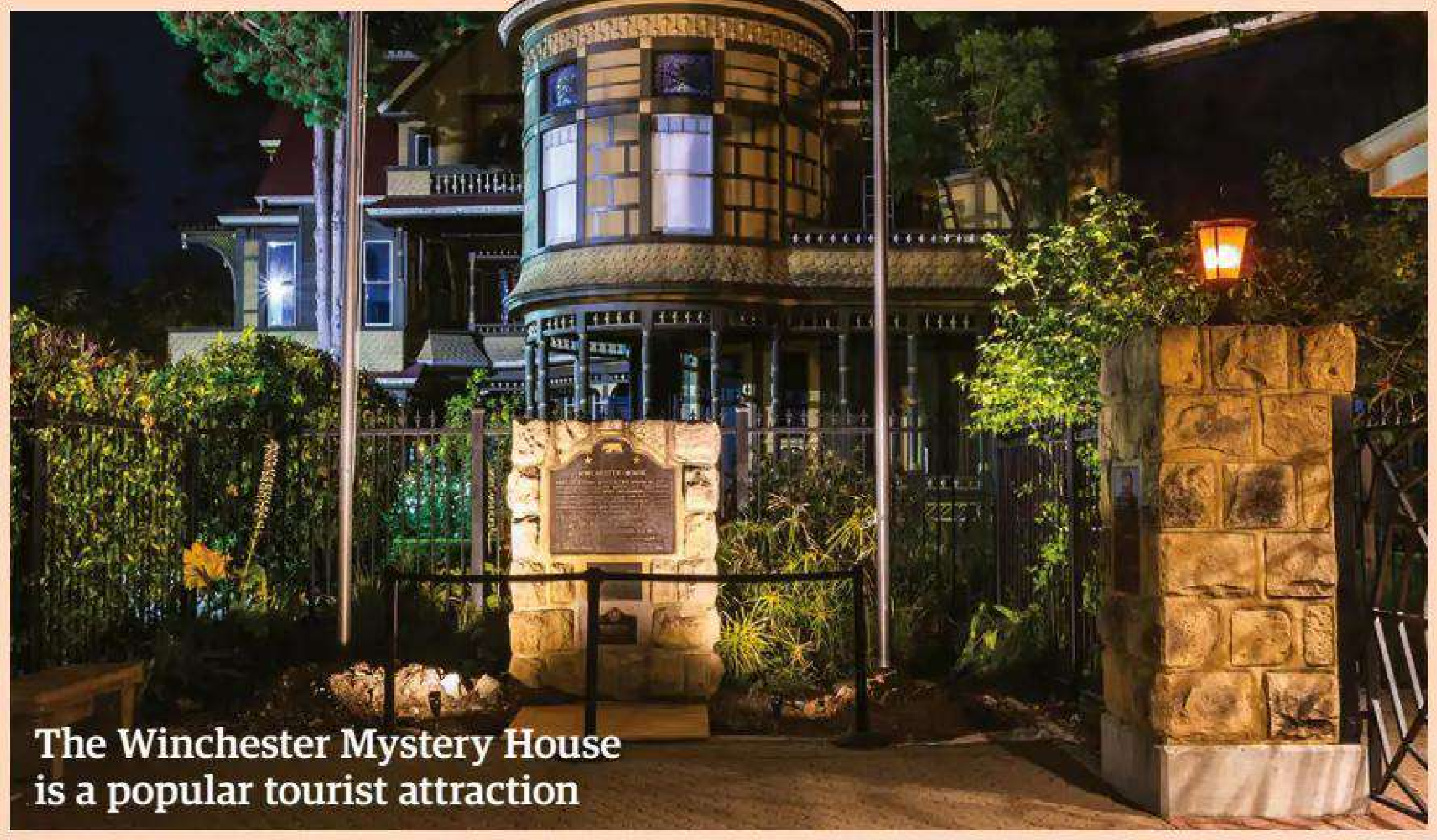
But decades after McCurdy's demise his story took a strange turn. In 1976 *The Six Million Dollar Man* was one of the most popular shows on American television and told the story of Colonel Steve Austin, who becomes a cyborg working for the United States. One episode involved a villain's secret lair hidden in a ghost train, and filming took place at the Nu-Pike Amusement Park's Laff in the Dark haunted ride at Long Beach, California.

But one particular dummy, sprayed with orange paint and hanging from a noose, didn't quite fit the scene. When removing it, the crew accidentally damaged its arm and were horrified to discover something inside – human bone. The 'dummy' was in fact the mummified remains of McCurdy. The undertaker Joseph L Johnson had not been paid for his services and had put the body on display for paying audiences. McCurdy had then been passed around various carnivals and fairgrounds until finally arriving at Long Beach.

According to author Christine Quigley in *Modern Mummies*, McCurdy was finally laid to rest on 22 April 1977 – with concrete poured into his grave to prevent his remains from being mistreated further.



Filming of *The Six Million Dollar Man* TV show took a gruesome turn



The Winchester Mystery House is a popular tourist attraction

The Winchester Mystery House

CALIFORNIA

Perhaps the most famous weapon associated with the Wild West is the Winchester rifle. The repeating rifle helped put Oliver Fisher Winchester's company on the map, having acquired the design and patent of Benjamin Tyler Henry's 'Henry Rifle' in 1860. The first Winchester model followed in 1866 and both this and the 1873 version were in widespread use across America's frontier. The heir to this empire was William Wirt Winchester, who in 1832 married the love of his life, Sarah Lockwood Pardee.

But tragedy was on the horizon. William suffered from tuberculosis and died in 1881 at the age of 43, and Sarah inherited not only the Winchester company but also the vast fortune. However, having suffered a number of other bereavements, including her mother in 1880 and her father-in-law in 1881, she withdrew from society and moved to California.

Purchasing a sprawling farmhouse in San Jose, she immediately began remodelling the home… and seemingly never stopped. The result includes skylights situated in the floors, staircases that lead nowhere and secret passages.

Popular legend has it that Sarah believed she was being haunted by the ghosts of people slain by the Winchester weapons, and she altered the house in this haphazard manner to confuse these spirits and keep them at bay.

Over the years this macabre story has become part of Californian folklore, and in 2018 the movie *Winchester*, starring Helen Mirren as Sarah Winchester, drew on the ghostly legend as the basis for its plot.

Sarah Winchester designed and constructed the bizarre house

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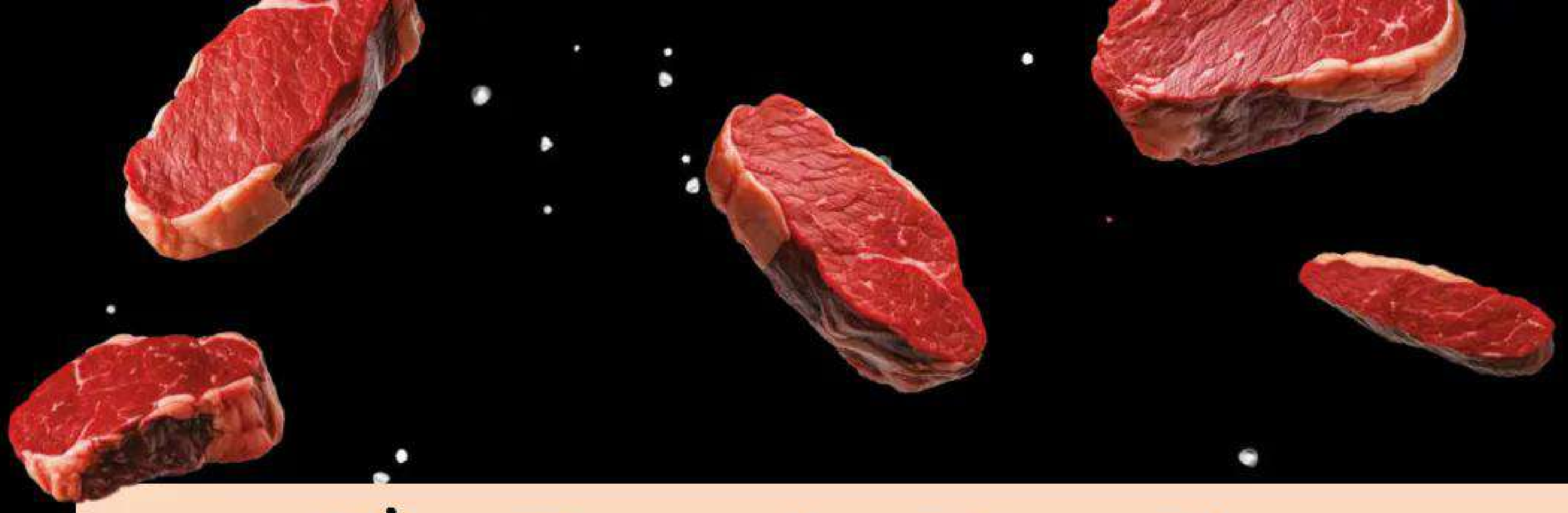


Wild Bill and the Well-Endowed Bull

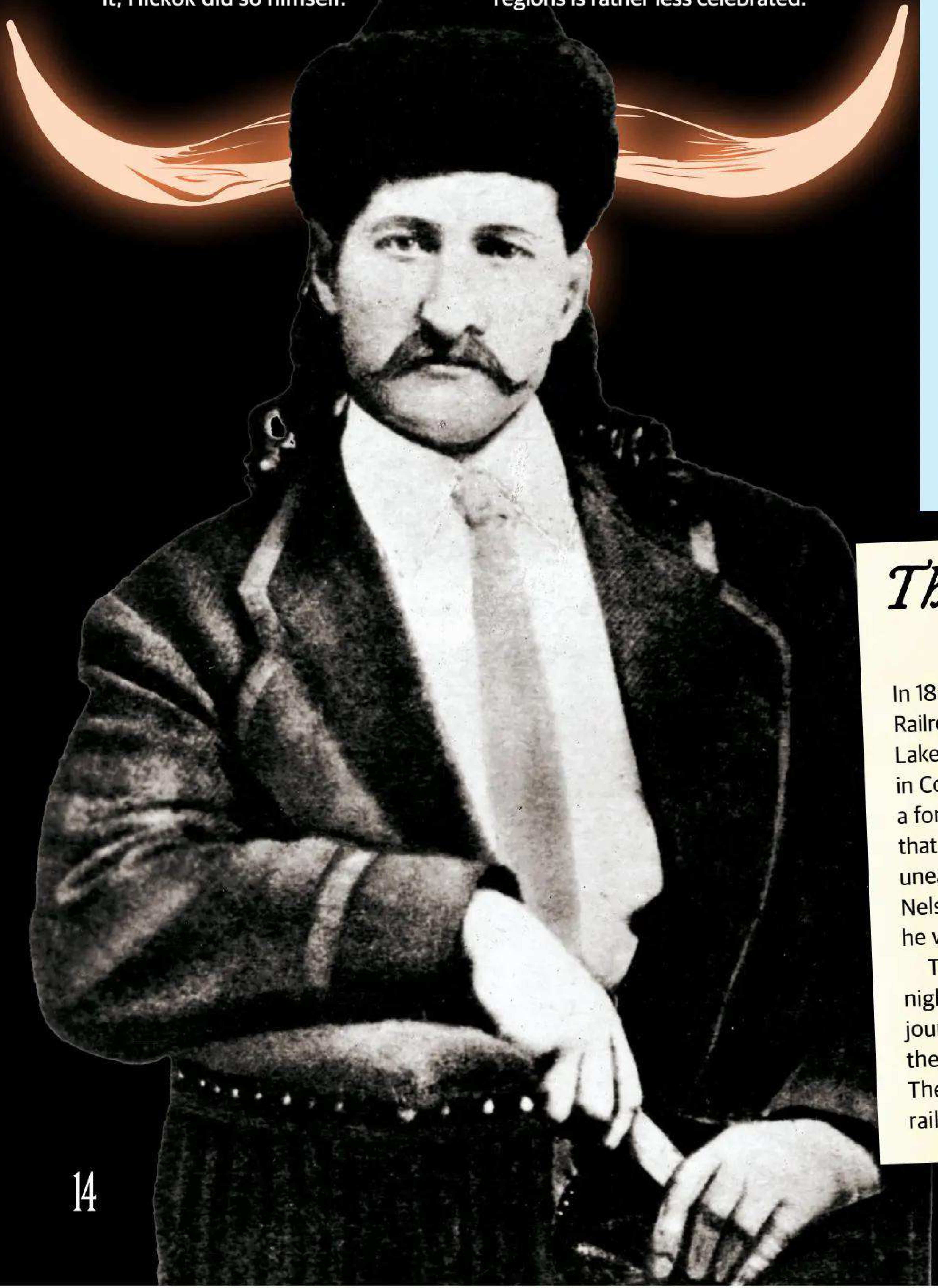
TEXAS

Wild Bill Hickok is without doubt one of the most famous figures of the Wild West. A lawman and marksman of some repute, he eventually became a renowned folk hero and one of the most established icons of frontier life. As with any well-known personality, there are many legends and tales told about him, but one story in particular is a peculiar yarn concerning a well-endowed bull. Or, at least, a painting of a bull.

In 1871, Phil Coe and Ben Thompson became joint owners of the Bull's Head Saloon in Abilene, Texas. Fancying a spot of redecorating, they adorned their new premises with a painting of a bull with a comically large member. The mural soon offended some of the local women, and when Coe and Thompson refused to remove it, Hickok did so himself.

Animosity between the men grew, and when Coe boasted to Hickok that his aim was so accurate that he could "kill a crow on the wing", Hickok famously responded: "Did the crow have a pistol? Was he shooting back? I will be." Eventually Coe fired at Hickok when he was attempting to break up a fight in the street. When Coe attempted to shoot Hickok once more, the famed gunslinger drew faster and mortally wounded Coe. He died of his injuries a few days later. Tragically, during the incident, Hickok thought another gunman was creeping up on him and fired – killing a close friend.

While there are many stories concerning Hickok, the shootout with Coe is one of the most famous. But the fact that the feud began over a painting of a bull's nether regions is rather less celebrated.



The Kentucky Meat Shower

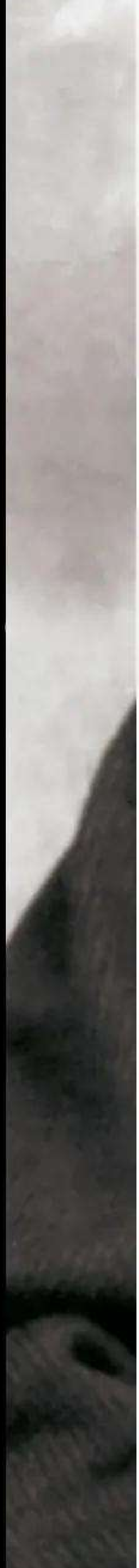
KENTUCKY

On 3 March 1876, at Olympia Springs in Bath County, Kentucky, Mrs Crouch was sitting in her yard when chunks of beef-like meat began to fall from the sky. According to a *New York Times* report, two men tasted it and said it was most likely "mutton or venison".

Sounds ridiculous, but there is surprising evidence that this strange event really happened. In fact, Transylvania University in Lexington, has a bottle containing one of the pieces of meat among its collections. But tests on the substance have been inconclusive and experts are still unsure what animal the flesh comes from.

So what caused the bizarre shower? In an 1876 edition of the *Louisville Medical News*, Dr L D Kastebine speculated that it may have been caused by a flock of vultures. The birds are known for their ability to vomit as a defence mechanism, and it's possible that a flock disposed of their latest meal all over Mrs Crouch's yard.

Keen to solve the mystery, in 2007 Professor Kurt Gohde attended Court Days, a popular Kentucky festival, with jelly beans whose flavour matched the unknown meat. He hoped that brave tasters might be able to identify the animal, but to no avail.



The Red Ghost

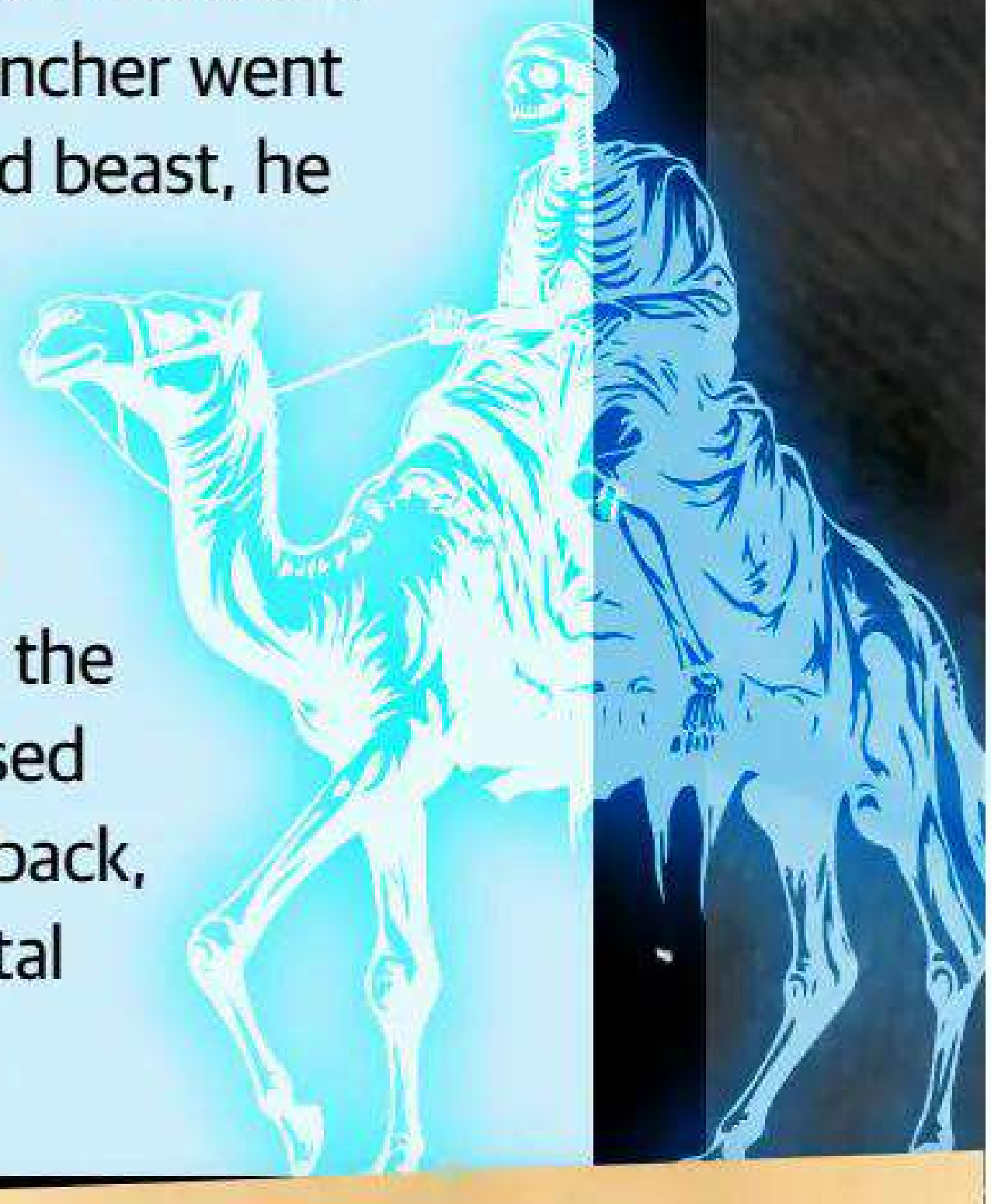
ARIZONA

In 1851, US Secretary of War Jefferson Davis had a grand idea: camels should be imported into the United States to help with westward expansion. In 1857, under the direction of the military, 75 were brought to the American West.

Initially the camels proved useful. Edward Fitzgerald Beale was able to travel with 25 of the beasts nearly 2,000km from Fort Defiance, Arizona, to the Colorado River near California. But the start of the Civil War in 1861 stopped their widespread use, and by the mid-1860s the camels had been auctioned off or let loose into the wild.

Twenty years later stories of a huge monster, most likely one of the camels but purportedly 9m tall, began to spread through Arizona. In 1883 the *Mohave County Miner* reported that a farmer's wife had been trampled to death by the creature. Another woman claimed she'd seen a "huge reddish-coloured beast" with a skeletal corpse strapped to its back.

The beast was eventually killed by a rancher, and *The New York Sun* reported: "When the rancher went out to examine the dead beast, he found strips of rawhide wound and twisted all over his back, his shoulders, and even under his tail." It's likely the strips had once been used to tie something to it's back, perhaps even the skeletal rider spotted astride it.



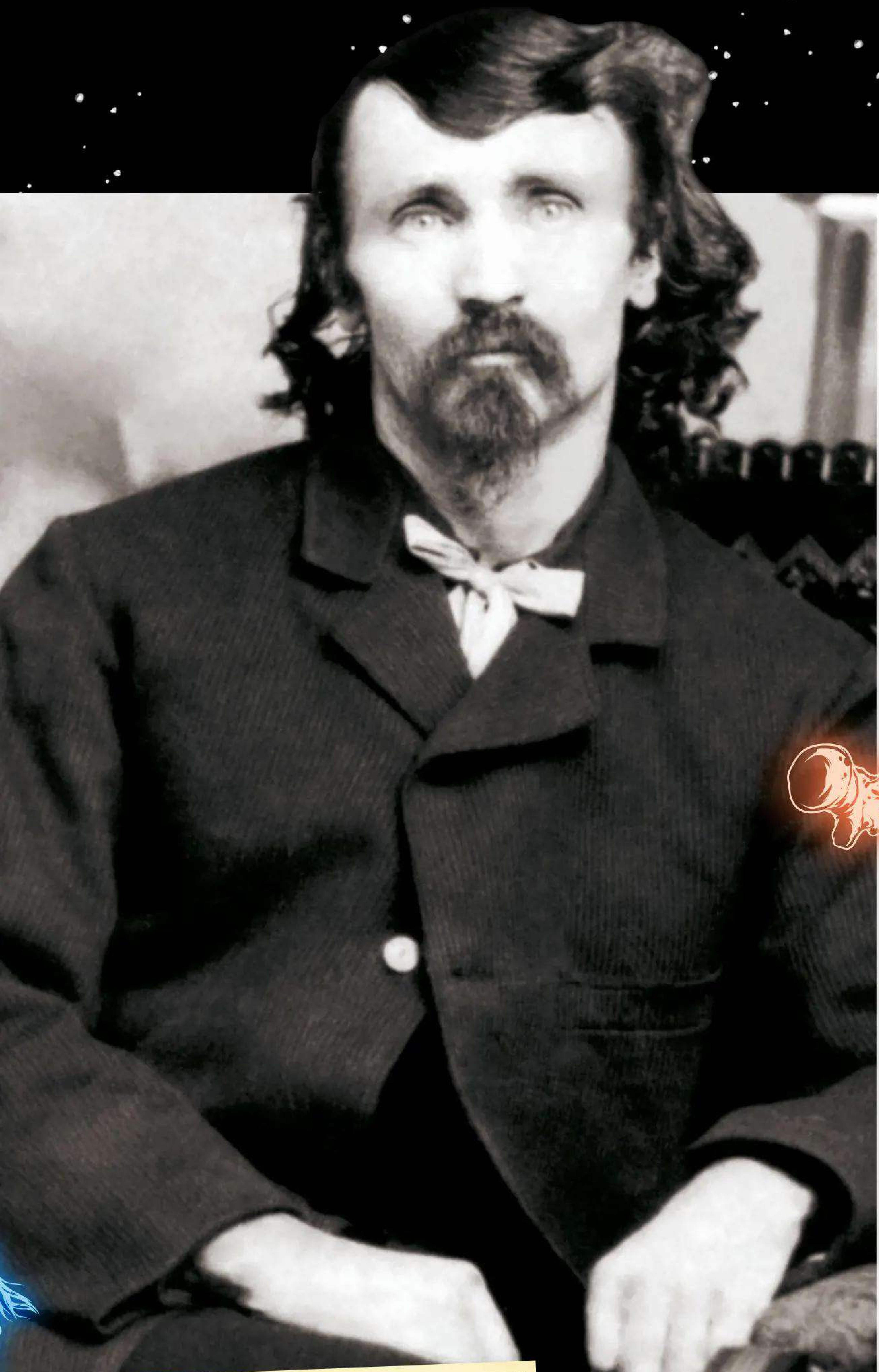
The Phantom Train of Marshall Pass

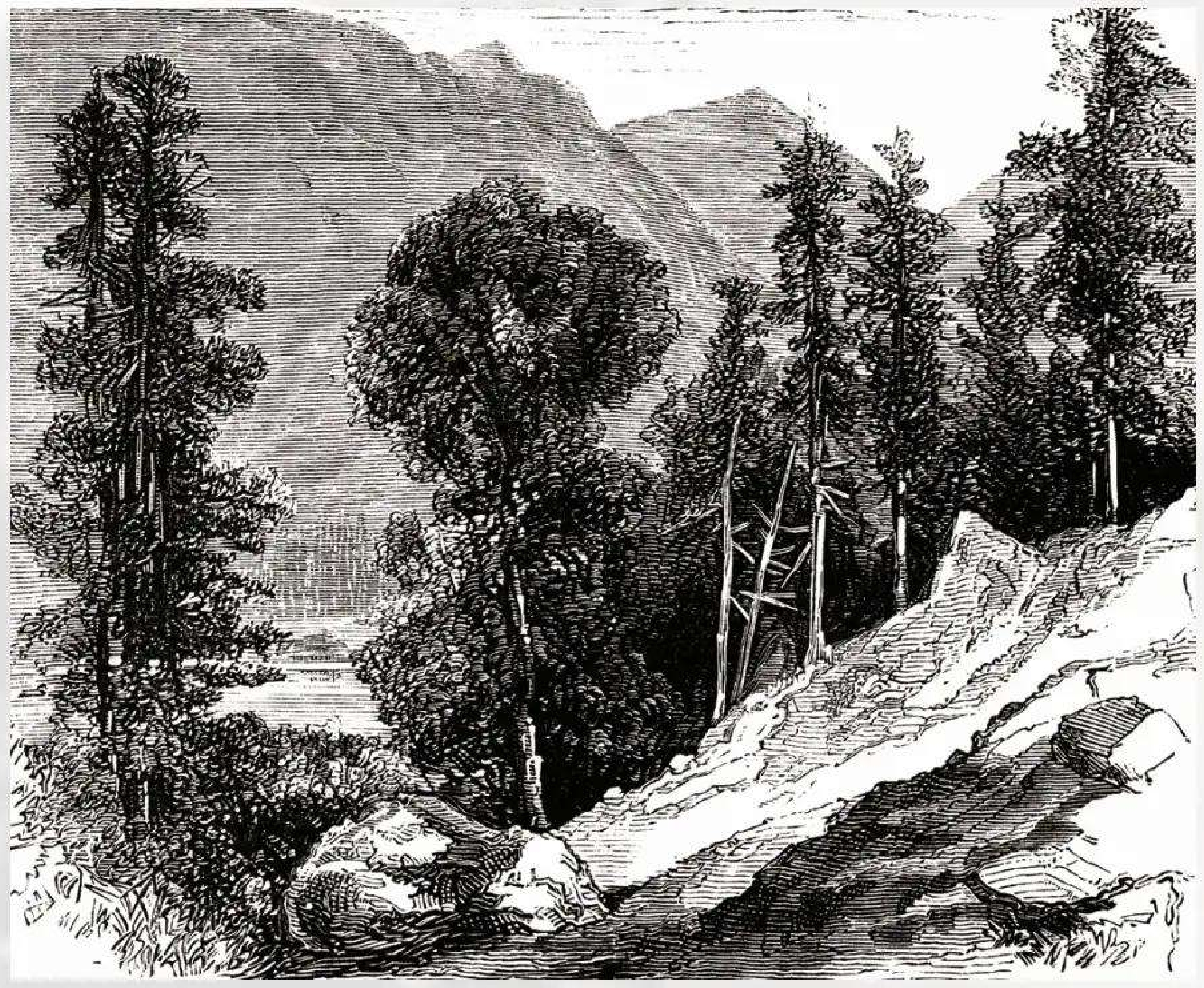
COLORADO

In 1880, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad extended their Denver to Salt Lake City route through Marshall Pass in Colorado. The steep, narrow pass is a foreboding place, and it's no wonder that such terrain would make people uneasy. But when railroad engineer Nelson Edwards arrived for work in 1891 he was more on edge than usual.

The train set off as normal that night, but at some point along the journey Edwards was alerted to the sound of another train whistle. The other train gained upon Edwards' railcar until, according to a report in *The Port Fairy Gazette*, he saw a "white form" inside the cabin as well as another on top of the carriages. Eventually, Edwards was able to move onto a side rail and allow the spectral pursuers to pass.

For weeks beforehand, other railroad workers claimed to have spotted a ghostly locomotive on the tracks. According to *Colorado Central Magazine*, in November of 1888 a train travelling through Marshall Pass had crashed, killing several people on board. Had Edwards witnessed the phantoms of this dreadful accident?





The Colorado Cannibal

COLORADO

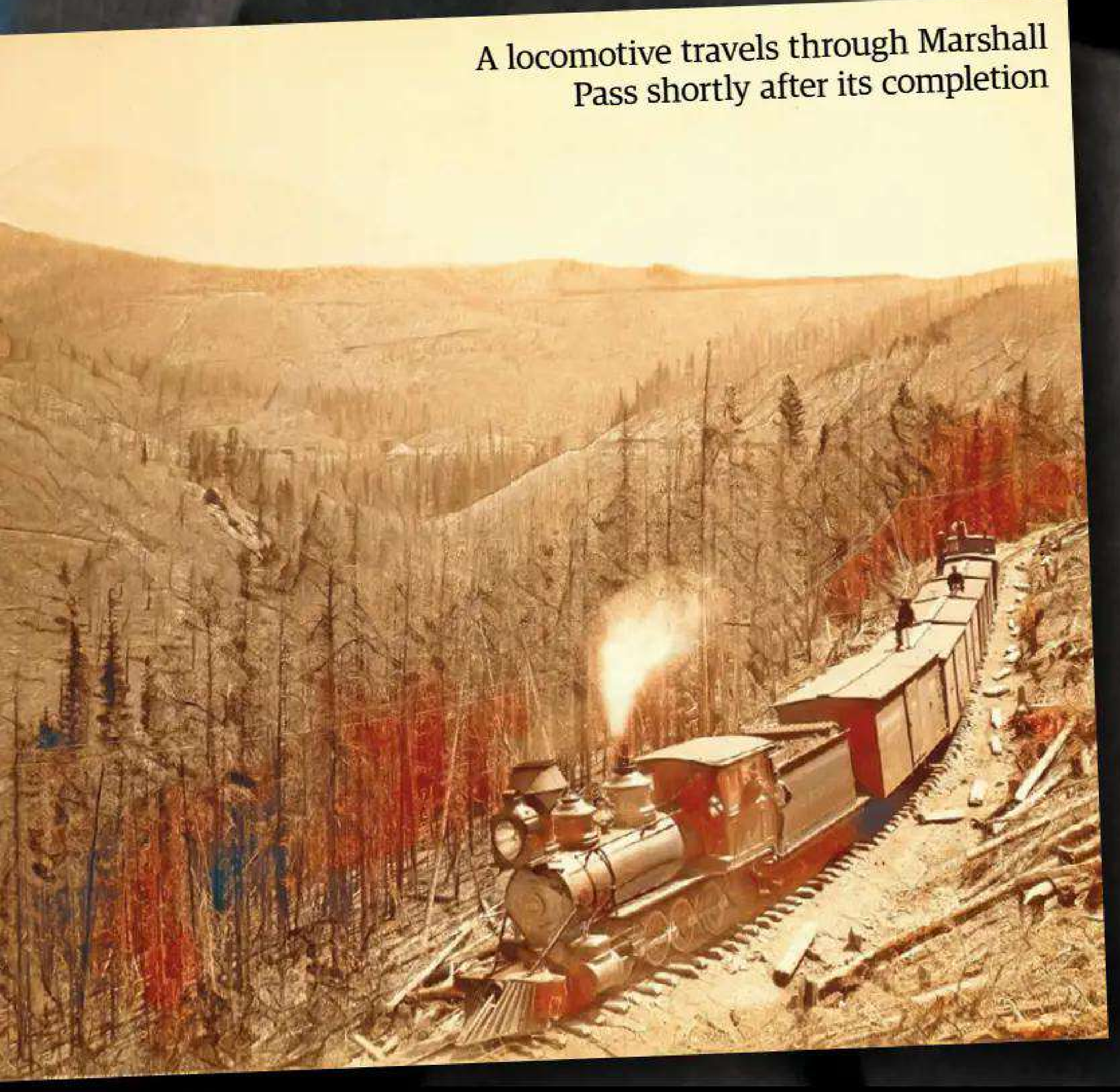
In 1848 the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in California led to a gold rush as more than 300,000 people flocked to the area hoping to make their fortune. Ten years later Colorado experienced a similar frenzy: the Pike's Peak Gold Rush.

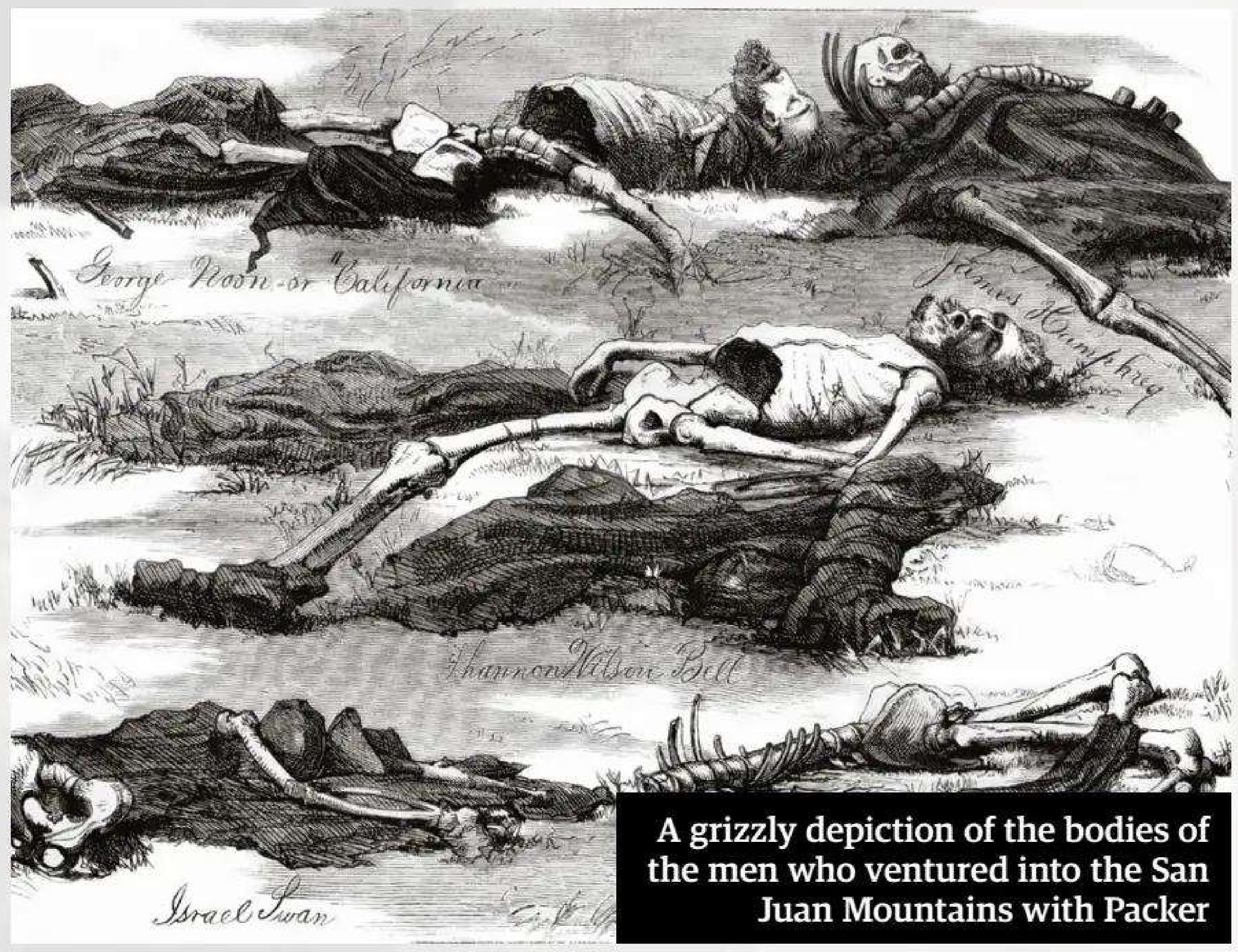
In February 1874, Alfred Packer and six other men headed to Colorado's San Juan Mountains, eager to search for undiscovered gold deposits. Along the way they met Ute Chief Ouray, who warned the men that they were unprepared for looming bad weather and implored them to turn back. Undeterred, the men continued their journey.

Six days later, Packer wandered down from the mountains – alone. At first he claimed to have become separated from his companions in the storm but, under pressure, confessed that as each of the men had died, the survivors had been forced to eat their remains. Israel Swan, along with Packer, was the last to die, and when his body was discovered showing signs of a struggle, Packer was arrested and charged with murder.

But he escaped and when he was finally captured nine years later, he refused to confess. Now he claimed that one of the other men in the group, Shannon Bell, had attacked the others with a hatchet. Packer said he killed Bell and did indeed resort to cannibalism to survive. Sentenced to 40 years in prison in 1886, he received parole in 1901 and passed away in 1907 aged 65. As he lay dying he still proclaimed his innocence.

A locomotive travels through Marshall Pass shortly after its completion





A grizzly depiction of the bodies of the men who ventured into the San Juan Mountains with Packer

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Better Dying Through Chemistry: EMBALMING & WAR

Preserving the dead was developed during the Civil War and had a lasting impact on military and civilian funerals through the modern era

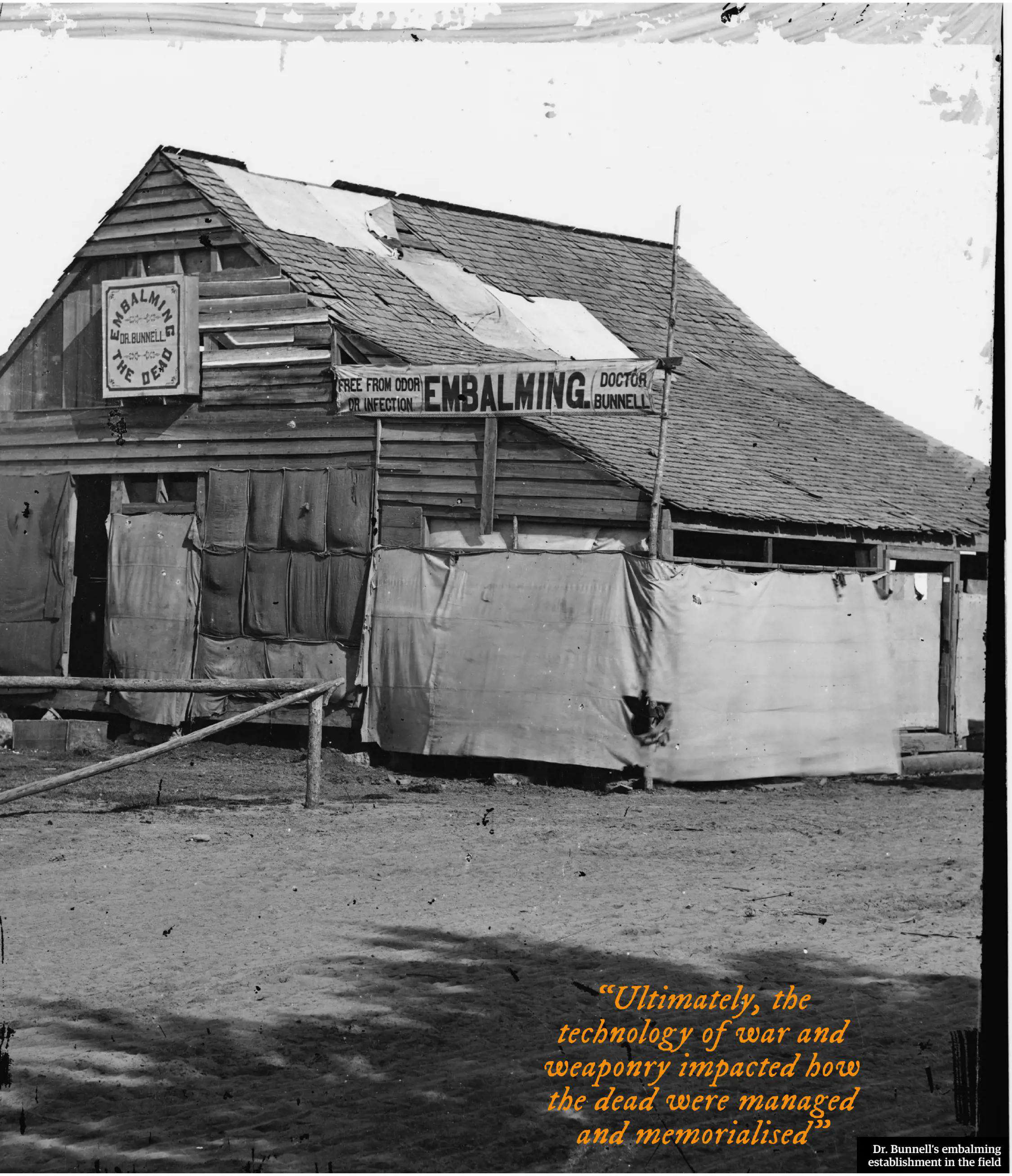
Written by Kelly Christian

The violence and trauma of war is nothing new. The scope of human existence is marked by conflict, which has evolved steadily into the modern era with new degrees of arms and weaponry. As the stage of war shifted to include new technologies, managing the morbid aftermath also had to evolve. Ultimately, the technology of war and weaponry impacted how the dead were managed, buried and memorialised. One such technology is embalming, which became popular during the American Civil War, and sought to temporarily preserve the dead, and allowed for burial rites, viewing and a final goodbye.

Embalming was not a popular practice before the 19th century, but various cultures explored bodily preservation after death. The Ancient Egyptians practised a form of embalming with mummification, requiring that the blood be drained, many internal organs to be removed, and the body itself to be salted and dried. This 70-day process was often reserved for pharaohs and other important civic members, as well as some animals. Indigenous Chilean peoples, the Chinchorros, explored embalming methods, as did the Chinese, and many other cultures across the globe.

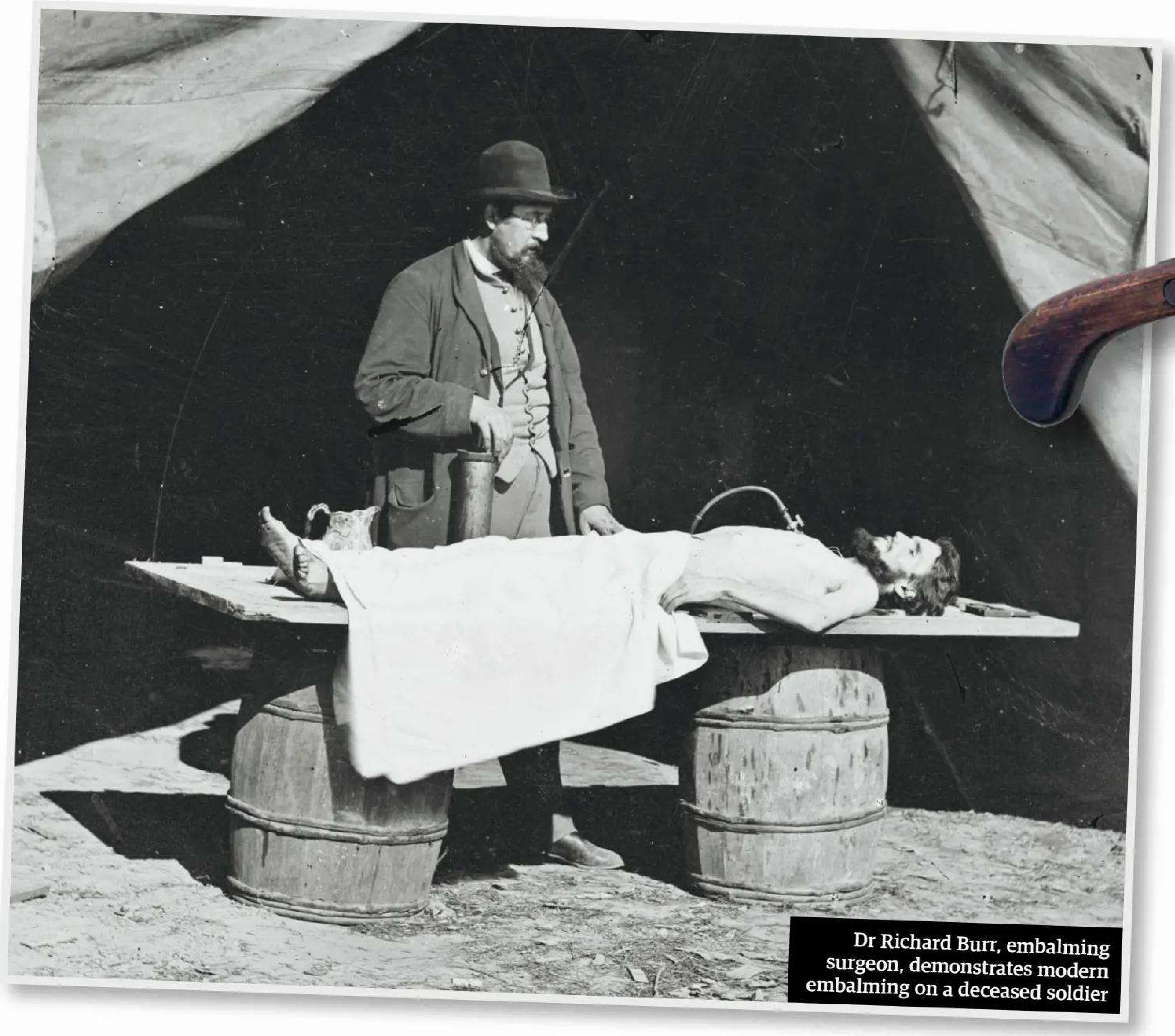
However, the practice of embalming as we know it today has more similar origins in Europe as far back as the 14th century. These initial explorations involved stuffing aromatic herbs within the body, draining the blood, or even removing parts of the body to attempt to slow its inevitable decomposition. Embalming was used in rare circumstances, such as ensuring that a recently deceased member of the aristocracy could be viewed by their subjects.

While these more rudimentary techniques sought to preserve the body in a more general way, it wasn't until the middle of the 19th century that chemicals would be used to preserve the likeness of someone as if they were still alive. French chemist and inventor Jean-Nicolas Gannal published his seminal work, *Histoire des Embaumements*, in 1838, and it was translated to English in 1840. This groundwork for arterial embalming – where injections of


EMBALMING DR. BUNNELL THE DEAD
FREE FROM ODOR OR INFECTION
EMBALMING.
DOCTOR BUNNELL

"Ultimately, the technology of war and weaponry impacted how the dead were managed and memorialised"

Dr. Bunnell's embalming establishment in the field



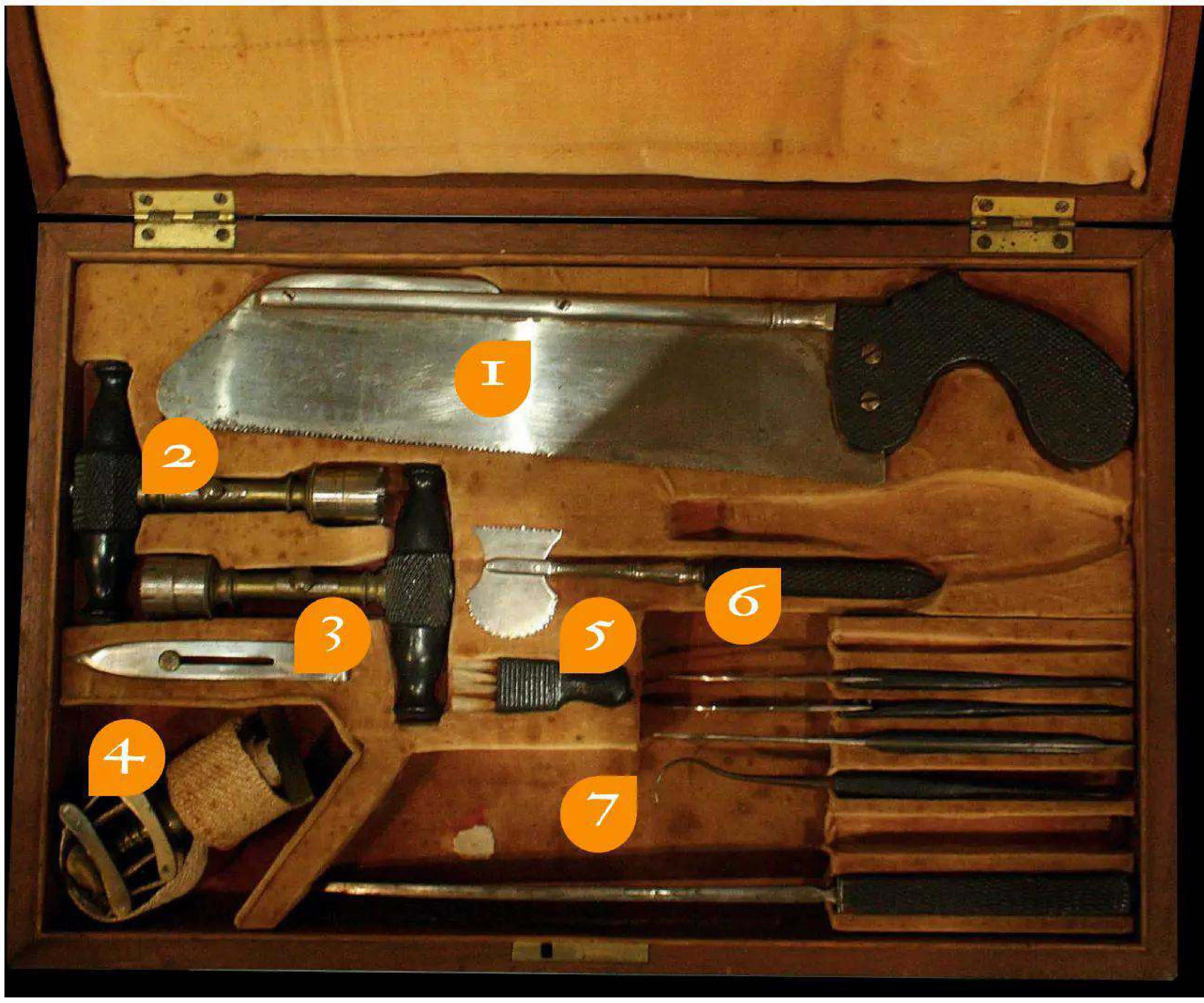
Dr Richard Burr, embalming surgeon, demonstrates modern embalming on a deceased soldier

chemicals into the carotid artery was laid by Gannal – fundamentally shaped the development of embalming as a standardised and common modern process.

The astounding number of deaths in the American Civil War would greatly shape funerary norms and embalming normalisation. The war began with the bombing of Fort Sumter, just off the coast of mainland South Carolina. The very early hours of 12 April 1861 marked the beginning of a conflict that would eventually end the lives of around 750,000 Americans over the course of four years, making it the deadliest war on American soil. The Civil War was responsible for killing 2% of the entire population of the United States and provided a significant opportunity for developing new technologies for managing the deceased.

The lives of many soldiers ended on the battlefield. The staggering numbers of death from battle came from bullets, bayonets and cannonballs. After the battle was done, it was up to the remaining soldiers to return to the grounds to take stock of the carnage. Many would return to the sprawling fields and forests to find their fallen comrades and prepare to bury their remains. Some of the dead would be wrapped in a sheet while the living got to the work of digging the hole. Most soldiers were buried where they fell, contained within a shallow grave, which was often shared with others who died nearby – communal graves were not uncommon. Many graves contained the remains of both Union and Confederate soldiers, as many soldiers took their last breath in enemy territory. In death, the soldiers became equals, both fighting for their country and sharing the earth together in burial.

Those who initially survived the battlefield often ended up in field hospitals, where death surrounded them and stalked them. Pneumonia, gangrene, typhoid, dysentery and malaria ravaged the wounded men. While medical professionals attempted to tend to the dizzying number of amputations and illnesses around them, disease spread rampantly. Prior to Louis Pasteur's discovery of germ theory in 1870, there was little regard for hygienic standards in the medical practice. A bone saw may be



The Surgeon's Toolkit

Surgeons were also trained as embalmers in the Civil War, and many of the required tools for the job served both the living and the dead

1 Bone saw
Also known as Capital or Amputation Saw, this strong and sharp blade was able to saw through large bones for amputations.

2 Trephines
This cylindrical blade was used to cut circular holes in tissue or bone. It was also used to cut into the skull to relieve pressure. The handle gave the surgeon additional leverage.

3 Scalpel
Scalpels were used for incisions of all kinds.

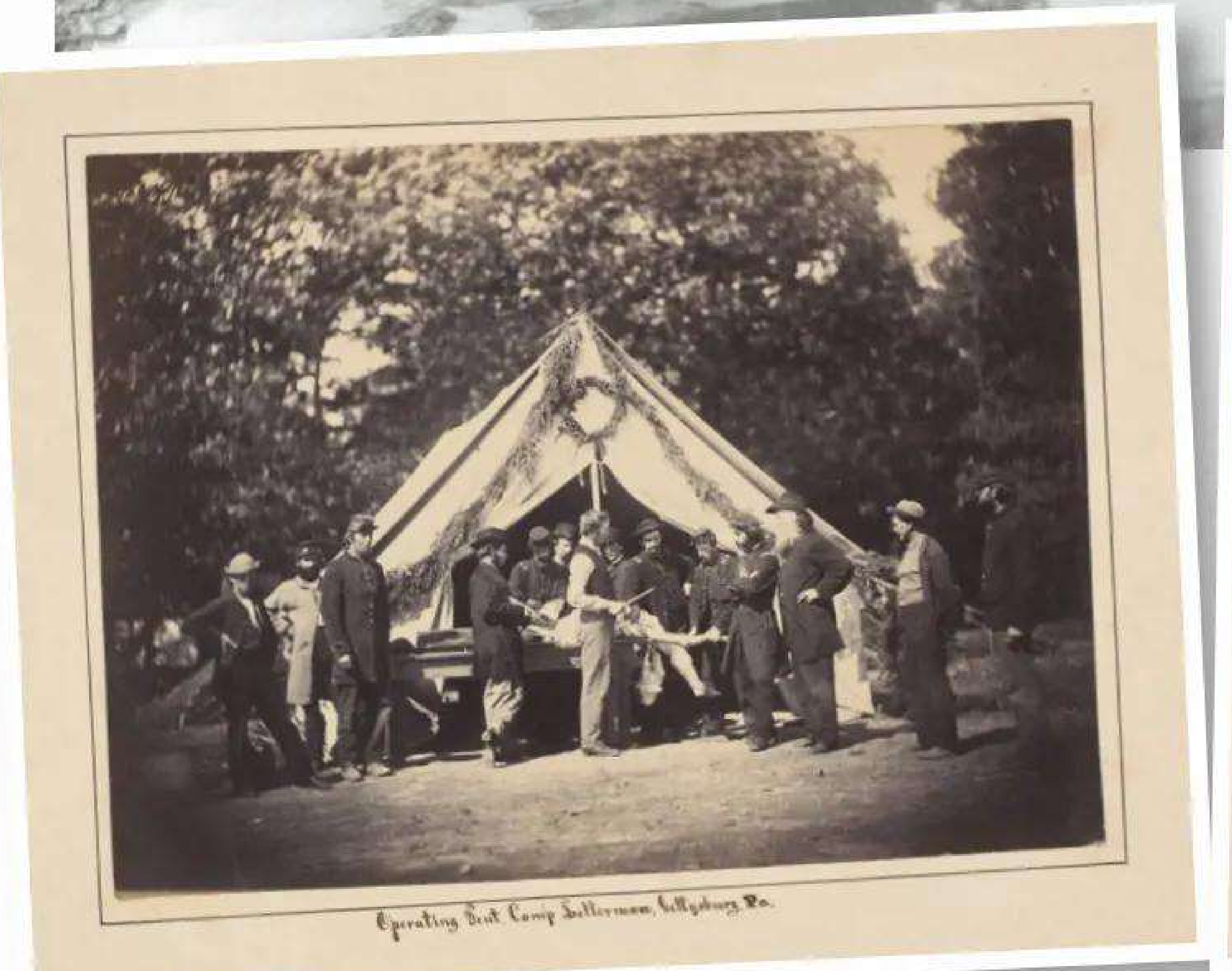
4 Screw-type tourniquet materials
Tourniquets create tight bandages to stop severe bleeding. This could also stop embalming fluid from leaking while the skin was being sewn back up.

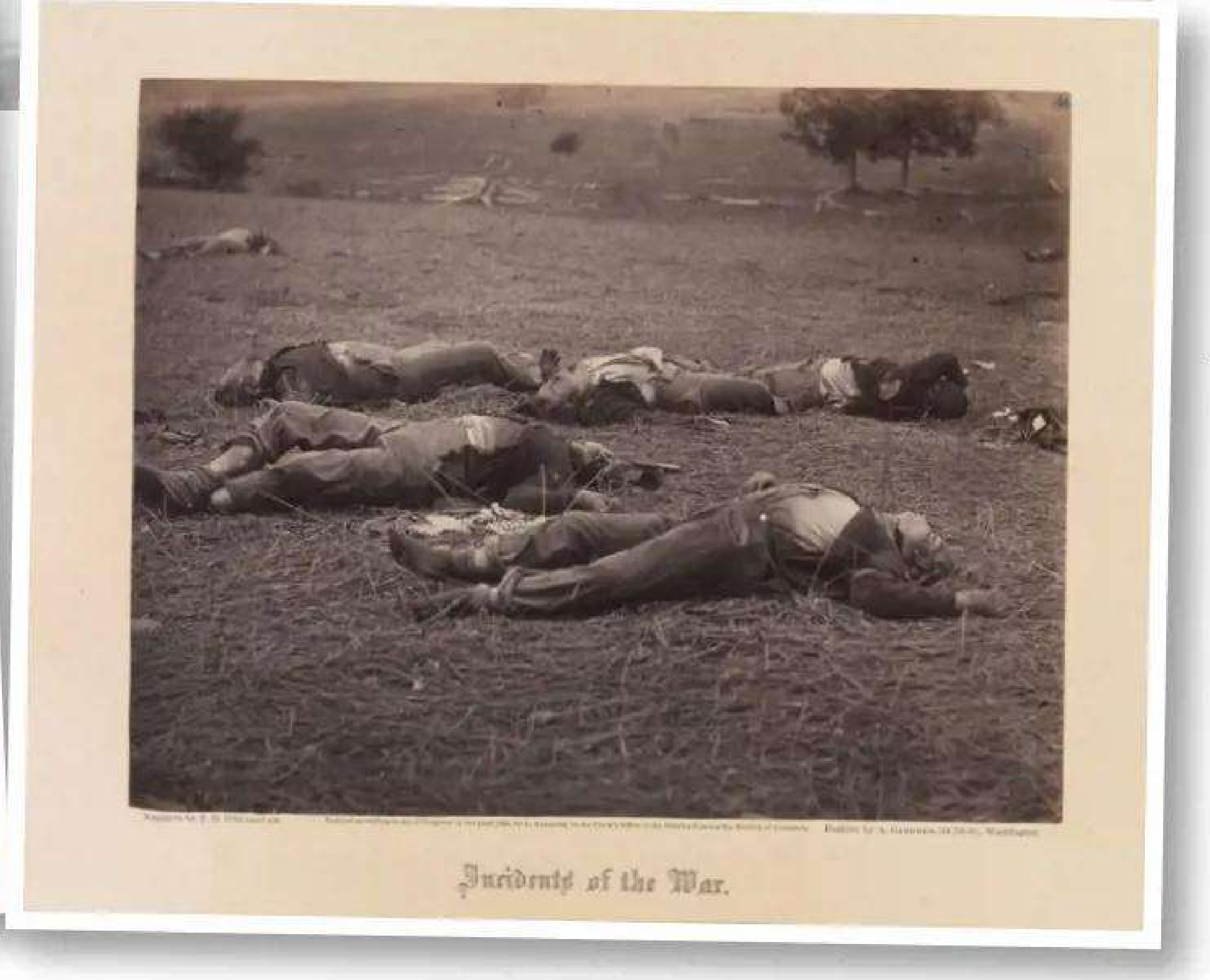
5 Small brush
Small brushes would be used to brush away fine bits of bone during amputations, or clean the grooves or teeth of other medical tools.

6 Hay's saw
This small saw assisted the trephines in cutting through tissue or bone.

7 Various surgical instruments
Including bone awl, artery hooks, and blades (bottom right). Small blades and implements assisted in cutting through skin and muscle, or separating out different kinds of tissue.

Horse-drawn German ambulances suffer bomb damage during World War I


Operating Tent Camp Letterman, Gettysburg Pa.



"On the battlefield, budding embalmers sought out test subjects to hone their craft"

bloodied by the removal of one soldier's leg, and then used immediately after for his comrade's arm. Infection spread quickly with these kinds of practices, and took the lives of thousands of men, who wasted away in agony.

Many soldiers died far away from their families, shifting the tradition of home burials to something that was no longer feasible. The unavoidable decay of the deceased soldier was a race against time that few families ever won. Embalming, however, provided an opportunity for the living to say goodbye to their beloved dead. The Victorians valued a 'good death', a concept whereby the dying could pass away at home, surrounded by family, and be spiritually and emotionally prepared for their final breath. Obviously this was not possible with battlefield deaths, but it at least offered some closure to the soldiers' families.

Dr Thomas Holmes was one of the first and most prominent practitioners of embalming. His formal medical training often included work on cadavers, and he became interested in how bodies were able to be stabilised for his scholarly practice. After working with a phrenologist to conduct research on Egyptian mummies, Holmes became convinced that the human body could be preserved safely with chemicals. Early attempts at embalming followed the arterial embalming method, draining the veins and arteries and replacing it. Toxic materials such as arsenic and mercury were used initially, varying greatly from modern embalming fluids, which are often a cocktail of formaldehyde, glutaraldehyde, phenol, methanol and others. The timing of his work could not have been better, as his initial embalming experiments were completed just before the Civil War broke out. His subsequent services as a mortician would eventually lead him to earn the title of the American 'father of modern embalming'.

Embalming was first introduced to the general public through the death and preservation of Colonel Elmer M Ellsworth. Ellsworth was a colonel of the Army Medical Corps for the Union, and a close colleague of President Abraham Lincoln. He was also the first Union officer to die in the Civil War. Ellsworth met his untimely demise while removing a huge Confederate flag from the top of an inn in Alexandria, Virginia, which could be seen from the White House, just across the Potomac River. Lincoln himself requested that Ellsworth lay in state so that the public may come to view and memorialise him, and thus began the work of Dr Holmes and his embalming method.

Lincoln eventually solicited Holmes to train surgeons working on the front lines with this new procedure. The vast number of dead bodies offered plenty of opportunities for budding embalmers to hone their craft, as it was on the battlefield that embalmers sought out their test subjects. Holmes set up shop instructing the procedure. First, blood was to be removed from all arteries and veins. For soldiers who died on the field, many of them met their end violently and bled out before they were brought to the embalmer, allowing the surgeon to skip this step. Second, an incision would be cut into the axillary (armpit) artery, and an instrument composed of a rubber ball attached to a small hose would be inserted into it. This would pump the embalming fluid into the veins. Holmes sold his own brand of embalming fluid for $3 per bottle, and eventually patented his own embalming syringe many years later in 1890.

With the Holmes method spreading in dismal popularity, embalming barns and tents popped up across the landscape with their chemistry and instruments waiting for the living to cease. Newly trained practitioners gathered corpses off the field, employed their embalming techniques, and hoped their investment would pay off. Many in the trade worked with families hoping to secure their services after locating the body of their loved one. Unclaimed bodies might be embalmed and then displayed in a storefront to display the embalmer's handiwork as a kind of advertisement. More dubious embalmers found the dead, embalmed them, and held them hostage until the family paid for the unsolicited service. This unfortunate exchange highlights the lack of regulation for death care at this time.

While it is standard practice for contemporary funeral directors to set the face and prepare the body for viewing, many embalmers completed their service by simply cleaning the body and securing any major wounds to ensure that the body would be sent home safely. Soldiers were then sent off in a coffin or box, sometimes lined with materials such as zinc to aid the preservation process. Many cabinet and furniture makers found additional income in the embalming business, as they could then use their own wooden vessels for the final step of sending the dead on their last journey home.

Of all of the deaths, it is estimated that nearly 40,000 soldiers were eventually embalmed, most of whom died not knowing that their bodies would be preserved. Nearly all embalmed soldiers were from the Union army, as the Confederacy never implemented an embalming practice in their military. It is thought Dr. Holmes embalmed more than 4,000 soldiers, charging up to $100 per body ($1,600 in today's currency). Enlisted men, their families and relief associations banded together to raise funds to secure embalming services of fallen soldiers so that they could be shipped home. The cost was prohibitive for many, meaning that working-class families were not afforded the opportunity to have their fallen loved ones returned to them. While some practitioners of embalming sought to have soldiers pre-pay before entering battle, this practice became discouraged under General Ulysses S Grant in January 1865, citing that such morbid preparations had a negative effect on soldiers' morale.

> *"The stress of managing a decaying body in the summer heat no longer haunted families"*

Just months later, President Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theater by John Wilkes Booth, and became the first president to be embalmed. His body lay in state in Washington D.C., and then travelled by funeral train, making 180 stops across seven states for grieving Americans to view their fallen leader. The train was destined for Springfield, Illinois, where Lincoln would be buried. By the end of his journey, Lincoln remained intact, a feat that wouldn't have been possible without the new embalming method.

When the American Civil War ended on 9 May 1865, battlefield casualties ceased, but the grief and mourning continued. Nearly all families were impacted by the loss of a brother, father, uncle or cousin. Towns were wiped out, and the American landscape was scarred with the loss of life. Morticians took their practices off of the battlefield, and set up shop in towns across America, ready to provide the service of embalming to civilians wishing to lay their loved ones to rest.

While bodies were no longer being shipped across states to their homes, families had a new-found interest in outsourcing the troubling work of preparing the dead to professionals who could offer a variety of services. Embalming became a regular occurrence in burial rites because of its popularity and use during the Civil War. The stress of managing a decaying body in the summer heat no longer haunted families who were also grieving. The dead could be managed by a mortician who would clean, embalm and display the body for their families in the safety of a funeral parlour, removing the dead from the family and ensuring a hygienic display. Embalming was both modern and clean. Families could now send for far-away relatives to come home for a funeral, and embalming would ensure that the dead would be suitable for such a service.

While military conflicts continued throughout the end of the 19th and into the early 20th century, mass deaths from war did not peak again until World War I. The many millions of people, both military and civilian, that lost their lives would all be buried and grieved by the living. World War I was marked with an increase in brutality because of the introduction of submarines, tanks, missiles, machine-guns and chemical weapons. The effects of these new military developments were astonishing, and shaped how the dead were dealt with.

During the American Civil War, the number one killer was bullet wounds, which tore mangled holes through limbs and trunks alike. The French-designed Minié bullet was designed for maximum carnage, but did not obliterate the entire body. The leading killers of World War I were mechanised artillery, followed by small arms, and, finally, chemical weapons such as poisonous gas. Paired with the turmoils of trench warfare, World War I was a savage landscape of destruction. Automatic weapons had the capacity to completely destroy the enemy, and decimate the entire body.

The exceptionally violent arms technology, mass destruction of the environment and raging flu pandemic of 1918 made it exceptionally difficult to track the number of casualties during World War I. The dead were everywhere: buried

Death Tolls by Modern Equivalents

It can be difficult to conceptualise the scope of mass death during war, but contemporary analysis can provide more insight

American Civil War

750,000 people died during **the American Civil War.**

Of an **American population of 31 million**, that's **2.3%** who died.

In **modern-day standards**, that's **6.5 million people dead**, equal to the population of both **Chicago** and **Los Angeles**.

World War I

Around 21.5 million people died during **World War I**.

Of a **world population** of **1.8 billion**, that's **1.2%** who died.

In **modern-day standards**, that's **93.5 million people dead**, more than the entire population of **the UK, Austria, Belgium** and **Denmark.**

World War II

75 million people died during **World War II**.

Of a **world population of 2.3 billion**, that's **3.3%** who died.

In **modern-day standards**, that's **257 million people dead**, equal to the entire population of **Russia, Germany, Greece** and **The Netherlands**.

in trench mud, mangled in barbed wire across no man's land and sprawled in bombed-out buildings. There was no national system for burying the dead – enemy territory was a concept only for the living, as many of the dead, like those of the American Civil War, were buried where they fell. There were no embalming barns at the front lines of this war, but rather communal graves. Towns near particularly violent battles assisted with the dead, with many creating additions to local cemeteries in which to bury the soldiers who were killed nearby.

The lack of standard burials in World War I led to an increase in public monuments. These cenotaphs spoke to the great losses that so many countries had suffered. The implementation of monuments were resurrected in place of individual plots, as many soldiers were not found, remained unidentified, or whose international or even communal burials were not noted. Few soldiers made it home for burial, despite the demands of their next of kin. The challenge of locating the buried remains, preparing them for shipment, and sending them across the Atlantic to return home was truly daunting. For those who died in France, there was a ban on removing bodies as the French began to rebuild their decimated country, citing that mass disinterments would limit the reconstruction. The ban was not lifted until 1920, when remains would no longer be recognisable.

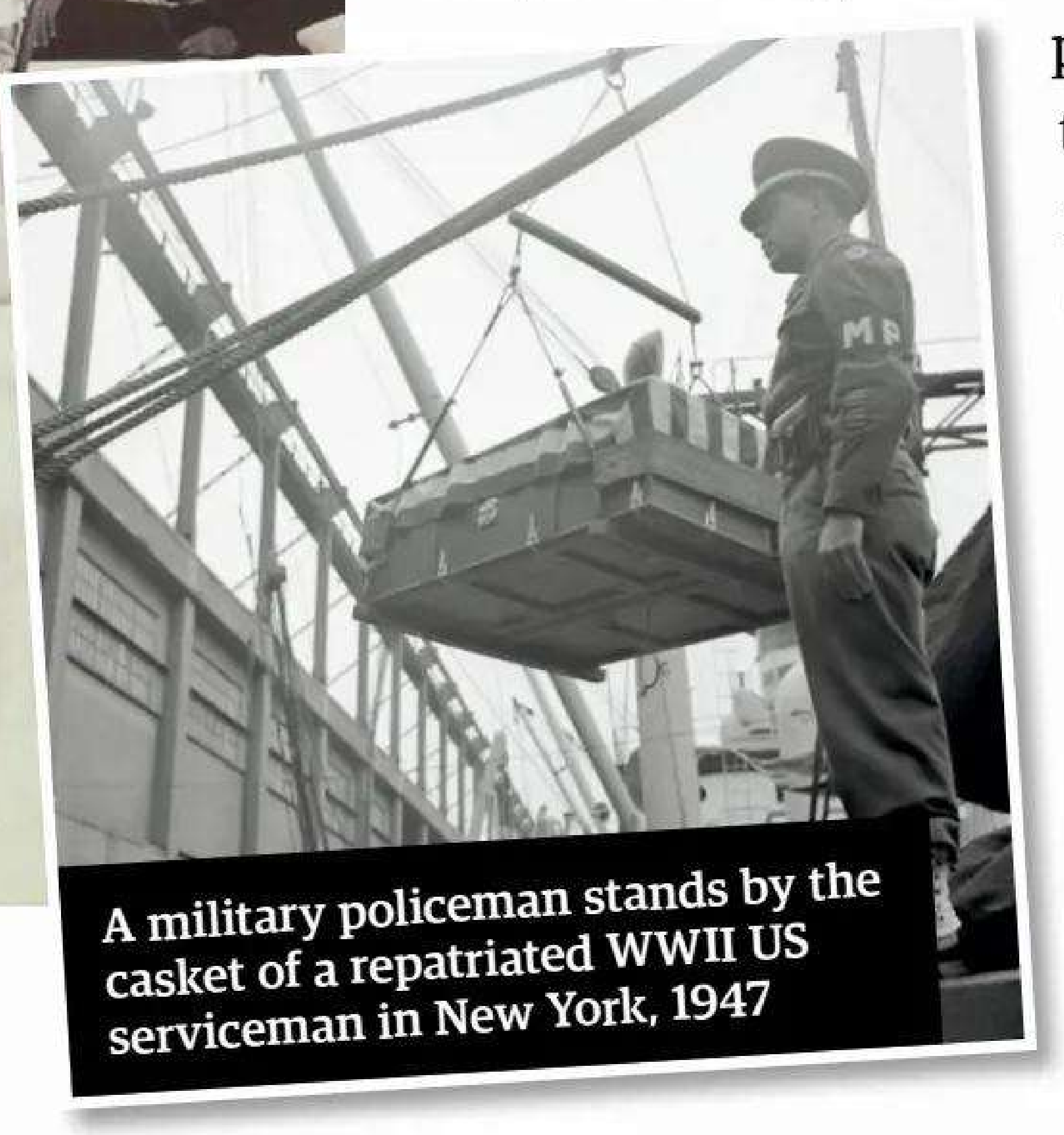
Repatriating bodily remains after war became an expectation after World War I. This would prove to be challenging just 21 years later. The mass destruction of human life in World War II was the highest in any military conflict in human history and spanned across great distances, with more than 75 million people losing their lives. The vast numbers of dead were nearly impossible to track, let alone return to their home countries. The incredible violence of evolving military technology during battle, in conjunction with the staggering number of executions, presented a harrowing problem for those left to manage the dead. Preserving the body for travel was less feasible than it had been in smaller-scale conflicts battled on home soil. In such large conflicts with huge amounts of death and destruction, embalming became a rare treatment for those who died.

As with many who died before them, the dead, or what remained of them, were buried where they lay. Still, families requested that the bodies of their fallen loved ones be returned to them after World War II came to an end on 2 September 1945. Many of the bodies being sent home after the end of the war were exhumed from where they lay and transported to American soil. Others were moved to official burial grounds and monuments in the country where they fell, but in more official cemeteries.

Embalming is a standard practice today because practitioners were able to hone their craft during the Civil War. The desire to preserve the deceased as they were in life provided comfort to those mourning their loved ones during this period, but that impulse has lasted into the 21st century. The atrocities of World War I and II provided additional challenges for managing the vast number of deaths where services such as embalming were often not available, but despite this, embalming became a staple of funerary practices as a means to ensure something resembling a 'good death', a concept that has quietly stayed with us since the Victorian era. For those who served, embalming offers an opportunity for the dead to return home for their final goodbye.

Confederate and Union dead side by side in the trenches at Fort Mahone near Petersburg City, Virginia

Infections spread easily in hospitals before Louis Pasteur's discovery of germ theory in 1870


A military policeman stands by the casket of a repatriated WWII US serviceman in New York, 1947

The New England Vampire Panic

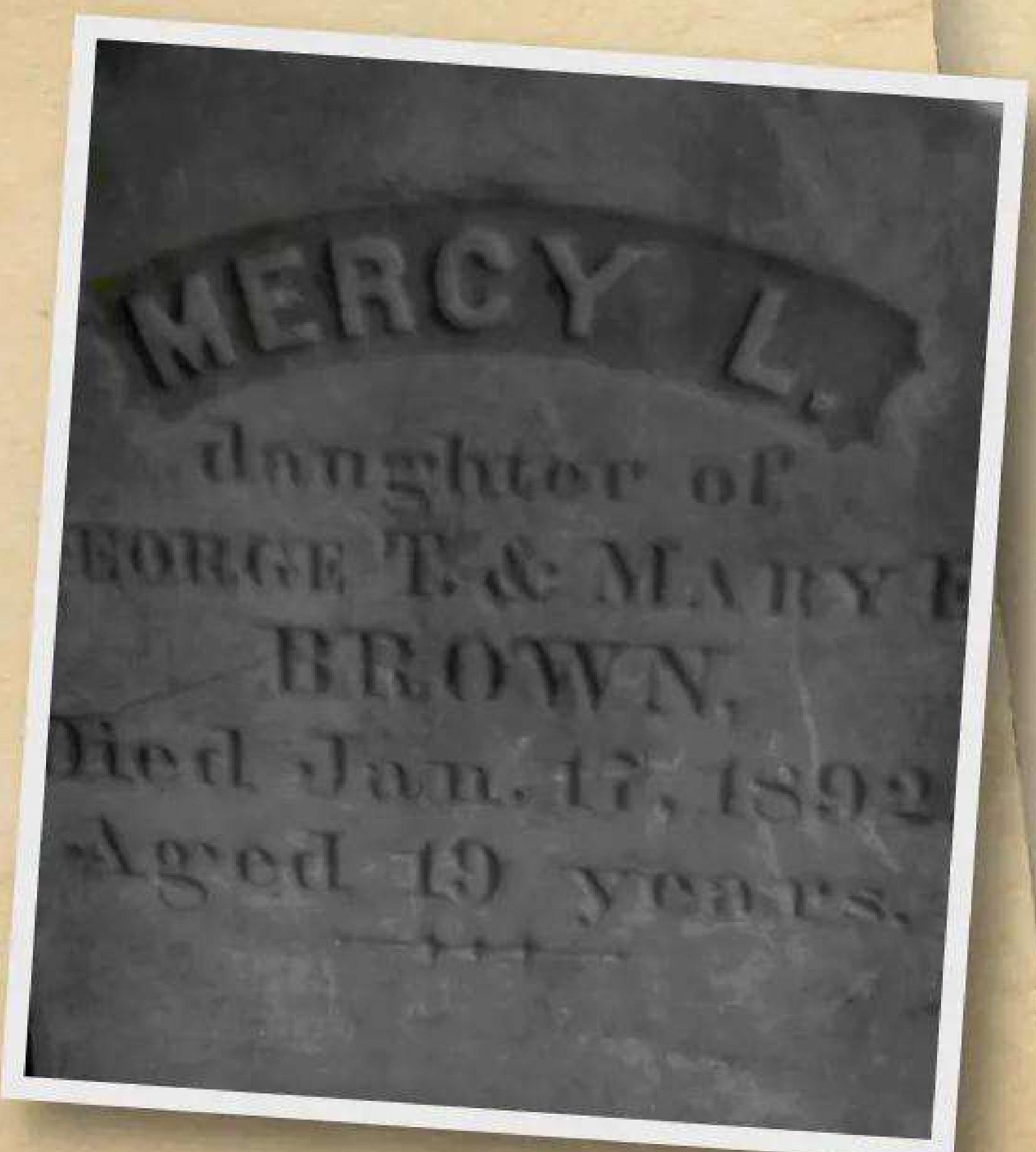
When New England families were stricken by a terrible wasting illness that none could explain, were the dead really draining the living?

Written by Willow Winsham

Chestnut Hill Cemetery, Exeter,
Rhobe Island, March 1892

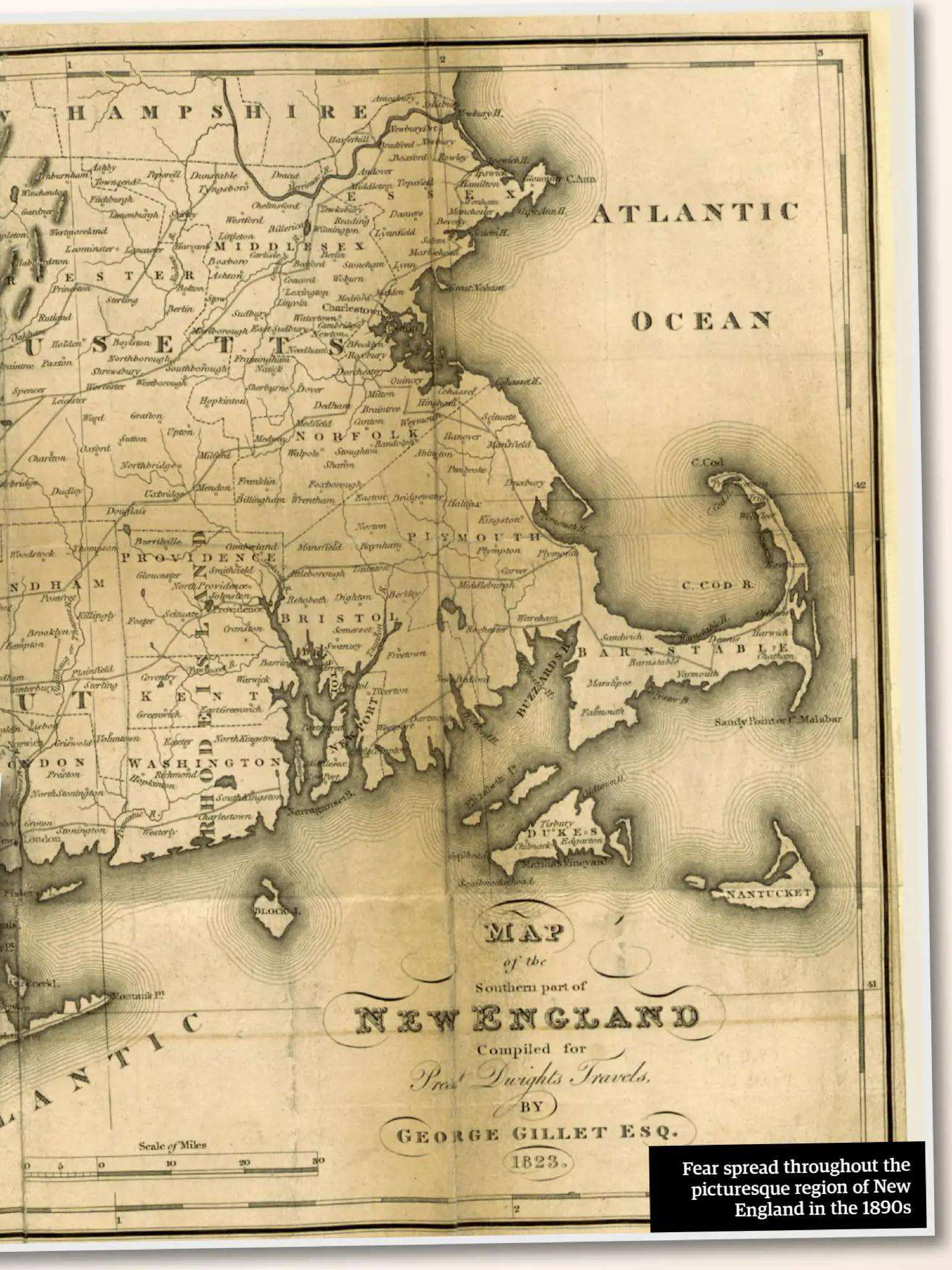
There was no turning back for the group that had congregated at Mercy Brown's graveside. Dead for just three months, the young woman had not, it seemed, been resting in peace after all.

As the coffin was opened and the body revealed to the horrified onlookers, the terrible task they had come to perform was only just beginning.



The body – looking suspiciously well preserved – was examined carefully, and then, with equal care, the chest was opened in order to locate the heart. As they had suspected, instead of being dead and withered, Mercy's heart contained fresh blood. Strengthened now in their convictions, a fire was kindled on a nearby rock, the heart burned until nothing remained but ashes. The job was done, the terrible truth revealed for all to see.

Mercy Brown was a vampire.


VERMONT
NEW HAMPSHIRE
MASSACHUSETTS
NEW YORK
CONNECTICUT
ATLANTIC OCEAN
MAP of the Southern part of NEW ENGLAND Compiled for Prest Dwight's Travels, BY GEORGE GILLET ESQ. 1823.
Scale of Miles

Fear spread throughout the picturesque region of New England in the 1890s

Autumn in New England: Stunning rustic hues disguise a tragic past

So goes the legend that circulates in many variations around the New England town of Exeter, Rhode Island. Each year at Halloween, the graveyard in question is visited by countless numbers of thrill seekers, eager to share in the celebrity that has built up around the grave of Mercy Brown. And each year, reports of ghostly corpse lights, the feeling of a strange presence, and even the voice of Mercy herself, help to keep the story alive, fueling and shaping this most popular of urban legends. Although the sensationalised recountings of the tale that have spread for over a century are better suited to a horror movie or Gothic novel, they are, in fact, grounded in historical truth.

Mercy Lena Brown was just 19 years old in 1892 when she died of consumption – known today as tuberculosis – after a devastatingly short battle with the all-consuming disease. She was not the first of her family to be afflicted; her mother, Mary Brown, had succumbed to the ravaging illness just under a decade before in 1883, while her sister, another Mary, had died just a few months after. One can only guess at the despair experienced by George Brown as he watched his wife and daughters deteriorate, helpless to halt their steady progress to the grave. Furthermore, his only son, Edwin 'Eddie' Brown had started to sicken before Mercy died. Despite removing himself and his wife to Colorado Springs in the hope that a change of air might help to reverse the sickness and restore him to health, the young man had returned ever closer to death's beckoning door.

By March, 1892, it was clear to all concerned that Eddie was on the verge of joining his mother and sisters. With doctors unable to cure him or offer any hope of combating the illness that held him in a deadly grip, the family, and those friends and neighbours who watched the family suffering, were close to losing hope. There was, however, one last thing to be tried. Several within the community approached George Brown and put to him a proposition. There was a belief, they said, well known and true, that when several in a family died of consumption in the way they had done in the Brown family, it was because one of the dead was not really dead at all. Someone was feeding on the life of those left behind from beyond the grave; sucking them dry, draining their vitality until they too perished.

Despite identifying the tuberculosis bacterium, Koch's attempts at finding a drug treatment ended in embarrassing disaster

Those who petitioned George Brown went further. What if one of his own family was the cause of Edwin's increasingly fragile condition? The only way to know for certain was to have the bodies of Mary Eliza, Mary Olive and Mercy exhumed and examined, and, if there were signs that their suspicions were well founded, to deal with the bodies accordingly. Despite his scepticism that any good would be achieved, George Brown bowed to pressure and agreed to allow the exhumations to take place. Hearing of his consent, Dr Harold Metcalf, the medical examiner for the area who had witnessed Mercy's futile battle and rapid descent to the grave, agreed to preside over proceedings.

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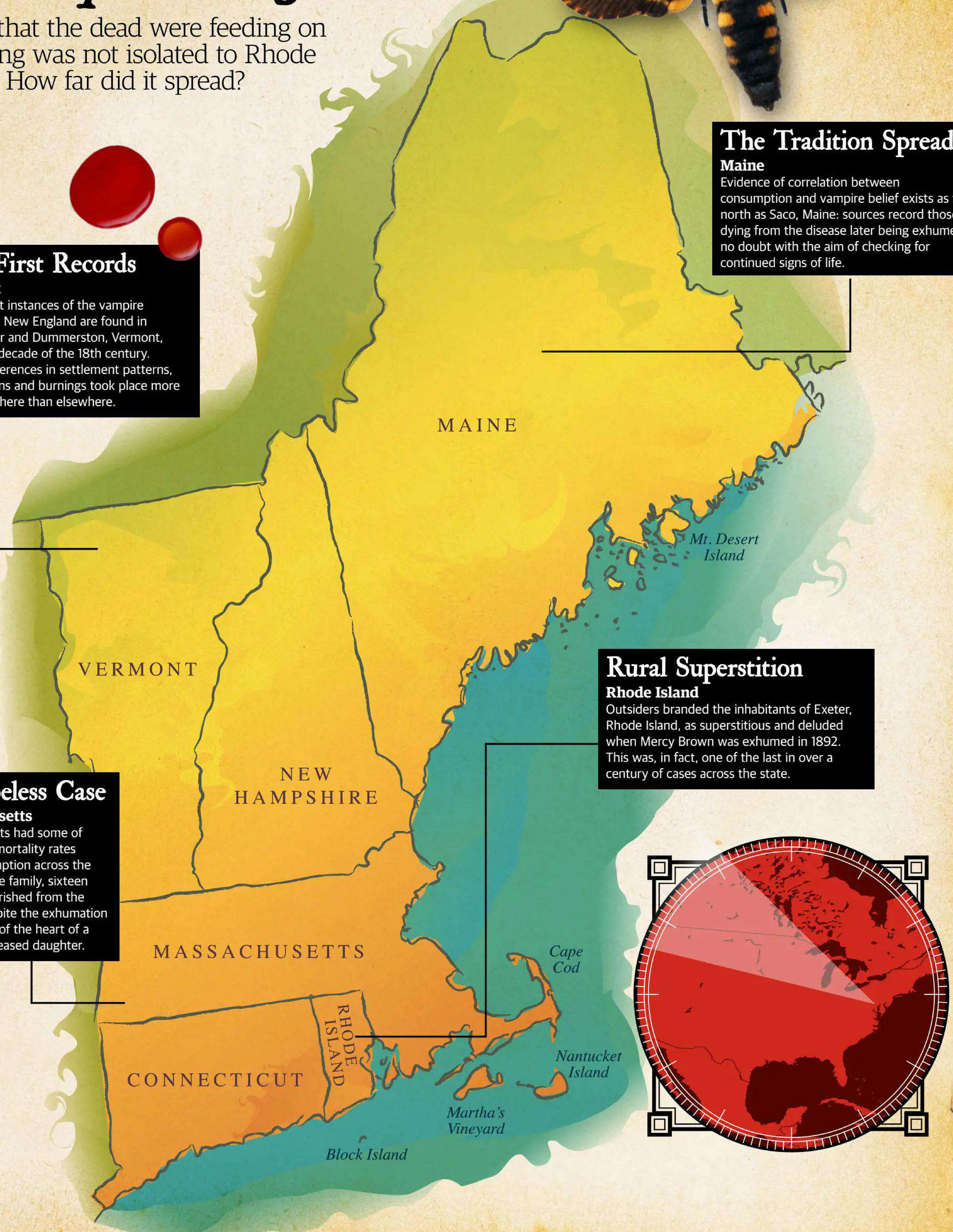
The Spread of Fear

Belief that the dead were feeding on the living was not isolated to Rhode Island. How far did it spread?


MAINE
Mt. Desert Island
VERMONT
NEW HAMPSHIRE
MASSACHUSETTS
Cape Cod
RHODE ISLAND
CONNECTICUT
Nantucket Island
Martha's Vineyard
Block Island

The Tradition Spreads

Maine

Evidence of correlation between consumption and vampire belief exists as far north as Saco, Maine: sources record those dying from the disease later being exhumed, no doubt with the aim of checking for continued signs of life.

The First Records

Vermont

The earliest instances of the vampire tradition in New England are found in Manchester and Dummerston, Vermont, in the last decade of the 18th century. Due to differences in settlement patterns, exhumations and burnings took place more publically there than elsewhere.

Rural Superstition

Rhode Island

Outsiders branded the inhabitants of Exeter, Rhode Island, as superstitious and deluded when Mercy Brown was exhumed in 1892. This was, in fact, one of the last in over a century of cases across the state.

A Hopeless Case

Massachusetts

Massachusetts had some of the highest mortality rates from consumption across the region. In one family, sixteen members perished from the disease, despite the exhumation and burning of the heart of a recently deceased daughter.

The grave of Mercy Brown lies behind the Chestnut Hill Baptist Church, the cemetery there garnering unwanted attention due to the legend of what took place there

If a gravestone was tilted it was believed the Devil had left the grave in order to do mischief, and further prove that something was amiss

On 17th March, 1892, the bodies of the deceased members of the Brown family were once more brought into the light. Neither the body of Mrs Brown nor that of her daughter showed any cause for concern, having decomposed in the manner to be expected given the length of time since death. Mercy, however, was another story. Not only was the body showing little sign of decay, when her heart and liver were removed and examined, the heart was found to still contain blood. This was taken as proof that Mercy was responsible for draining her brother of his strength from beyond the grave, feeding off his life force in order to keep herself alive. Without further ado, her heart was burned to ashes there and then in the graveyard.

Neither George or Eddie Brown were present for the exhumation or cremation, their absence one of the conditions for allowing the ritual to take place. Later however, the ailing young man was made to drink a solution containing the ashes from his sister's heart, those who backed the whole affair certain this would restore him to health now the hold of the "vampire" had been broken.

Sadly, it was not to be. Eddie Brown died 2nd May, 1892 at just 24 years old, consumption - or the vampire - claiming another victim.

There is no question that at a first glance, to modern eyes, such a story reeks of barbarism and horror. Newspaper reports of the day shared such opinions, branding the rural folk of Exeter as foolishly superstitious, deluded into defiling their dead in the erroneous belief that they held sway over the living. Such an interpretation however is simplistic to say the least: after closer examination of the details of the case, it becomes abundantly clear there is much more than backward superstition behind the events of March 1892.

The exhumation of Mercy Brown and the burning of her heart in an attempt to halt the progression of consumption did not take place in a cultural vacuum. In fact, this was only the latest example in a century long tradition of such an approach to consumption in the state, and the 'Vampire Panic' as it has been termed, was actually a response to the spread of tuberculosis across areas of New England.

Consumption was far from a new disease at the time. Known by a variety of names throughout

> *"Newspaper reports of the day branded the rural population of Exeter as foolishly superstitious, deluded into defiling their dead"*

© Getty Images, Alamy, WikiCommons

history, a neolithic grave from around 5000 BCE is proof of the existence of tuberculosis from that far back in time. Neither was it confined to one place - Egyptians in 4000 BCE were all too familiar with the illness. Despite the long history of the disease, fear and misunderstanding of the cause and spread of the terrible illness changed little over the centuries, and by the time the first quarter of the 18th century was drawing to a close, the number of cases of tuberculosis had actually risen sharply, with estimates suggesting that a quarter of all deaths could be placed at its door.

Despite, or perhaps because of this, there were many treatments attempted in the quest to find a cure for the dreaded disease. These included strict regimes of exercise or diet, or a change of scene to more "wholesome" air and climate. Indeed, Eddie Brown's stay in Colorado was an attempt to take advantage of the change in air, hoping it would lead to his recovery. The old staples of bleeding and leeching were also used on sufferers, as were opiates, purging, and good old fashioned rest. Some remedies - such as making an incision into the chest to collapse the lungs of the consumption sufferer - would have greater impact on the progression of the disease than others when it came to hastening or otherwise a patient towards the grave, but ultimately they did very little once an individual was in its clutches.

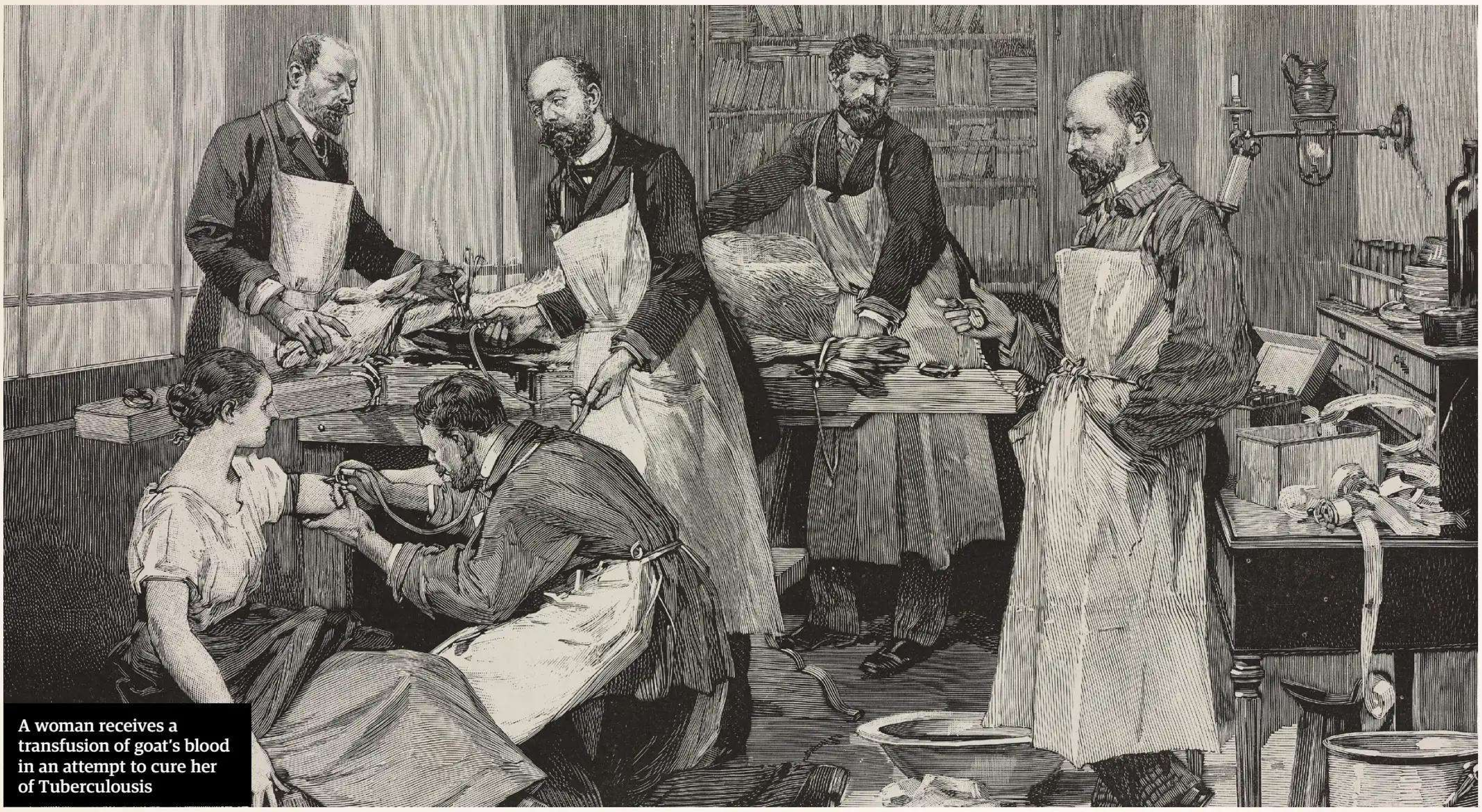
Ideas about how consumption was spread were often muddled, and far from the medical and scientific knowledge we have today. To the people of 18th and 19th century New England, it was seen to be passed through families, with some families being more prone to consumption than others. It was also thought - correctly - that the disease was contagious, though the reasons for that were not wholly understood. All in all, it was a terrible killer that claimed whole families, often in quick succession: it must have indeed seemed as if they were being picked off, one by one, by some dark, malevolent, force. It was not until the mid 20th century that the disease that had claimed so many lives was a worry of the past in the developed world, thanks to the advent of antibiotics.

> *"It was a terrible killer that claimed entire families, often in quick succession. It must have indeed seemed as if they were being picked off, one by one, by some dark, malevolent force"*

Other examples of the belief that consumption was caused by the dead feeding from the living are to be found across New England. Stukeley Tillinghast lived and died in Exeter long before Mercy Brown was even born. Father of fourteen children, tragedy struck the family in 1799, when four of the youngest died, victims of consumption. Sarah Tillinghast was Stukeley's tenth child, and the first to be taken, dying at the age of 22. After the deaths of her siblings, Sarah's body was exhumed, and, as in the case of Mercy Brown, her heart removed and burned.

In Cumberland, Rhode Island, in 1796, Stephen Staples had an odd request to make at a meeting of the town council in February of that year. He asked for permission to exhume the body of his dead daughter, Abigail, in order to try and save the life of Lavinia Chase, Abigail's sister. Permission was duly granted, under the condition that her remains were reburied with due dignity and respect. These early examples of such beliefs shows clearly that the "vampire" idea was well established in Rhode Island by the 18th century.

Such beliefs were not restricted to Rhode Island. Two cases are known of in Woodstock, Vermont. Tragedy had struck the Corwin family when consumption took hold. With one brother already dead from consumption, the doctors of the area all agreed that the way to save the second was to have the first dug up and the vital organs burnt to prevent the dead from draining the life from the living. This was carried out, and the ashes reburied



A woman receives a transfusion of goat's blood in an attempt to cure her of Tuberculousis

The ill-fated Brothers

With consumption spreading through the Ray family, action was taken to break the hold of the ravaging disease.

Name: Lemuel Billings Ray

Year of death: 1845

Age: 24

The eldest son of Henry B Ray from Griswold, Connecticut, Lemuel was the first in his family to fall victim to the ravages of consumption, dying in March 1845 at the age of 24. This was only the start, as his father Henry died just four years after, with brother Elisha also dying in 1851. With three members of the Ray family dead in the space of just six years, the ground was paved for what followed.

Two other brothers, James Leonard and Henry Nelson, were still living. In an effort to save them from the same fate as their father and brothers, the bodies of Lemuel and Elisha Ray were exhumed in May 1854, and according to reports of the incident, burnt to ashes. It is unclear if the ashes were ingested or whether they were reburied after the cremation had taken place. What is clear, however, is the mixed success of the 'cure'. Although Leonard lived until 1894 and thus escaped the disease that had claimed the others, Henry Nelson died the same year as the exhumation took place. Tragically, his wife and children also died of the same cause some time later. The case was reported in the Norwich Weekly Courier just weeks after Lemuel and Elisha were exhumed, the article leaving no doubt as to the terrible superstition that had allowed such a horrific practice to be carried out, the unsympathetic reporting matching other cases when relayed by those from outside of the communities involved.

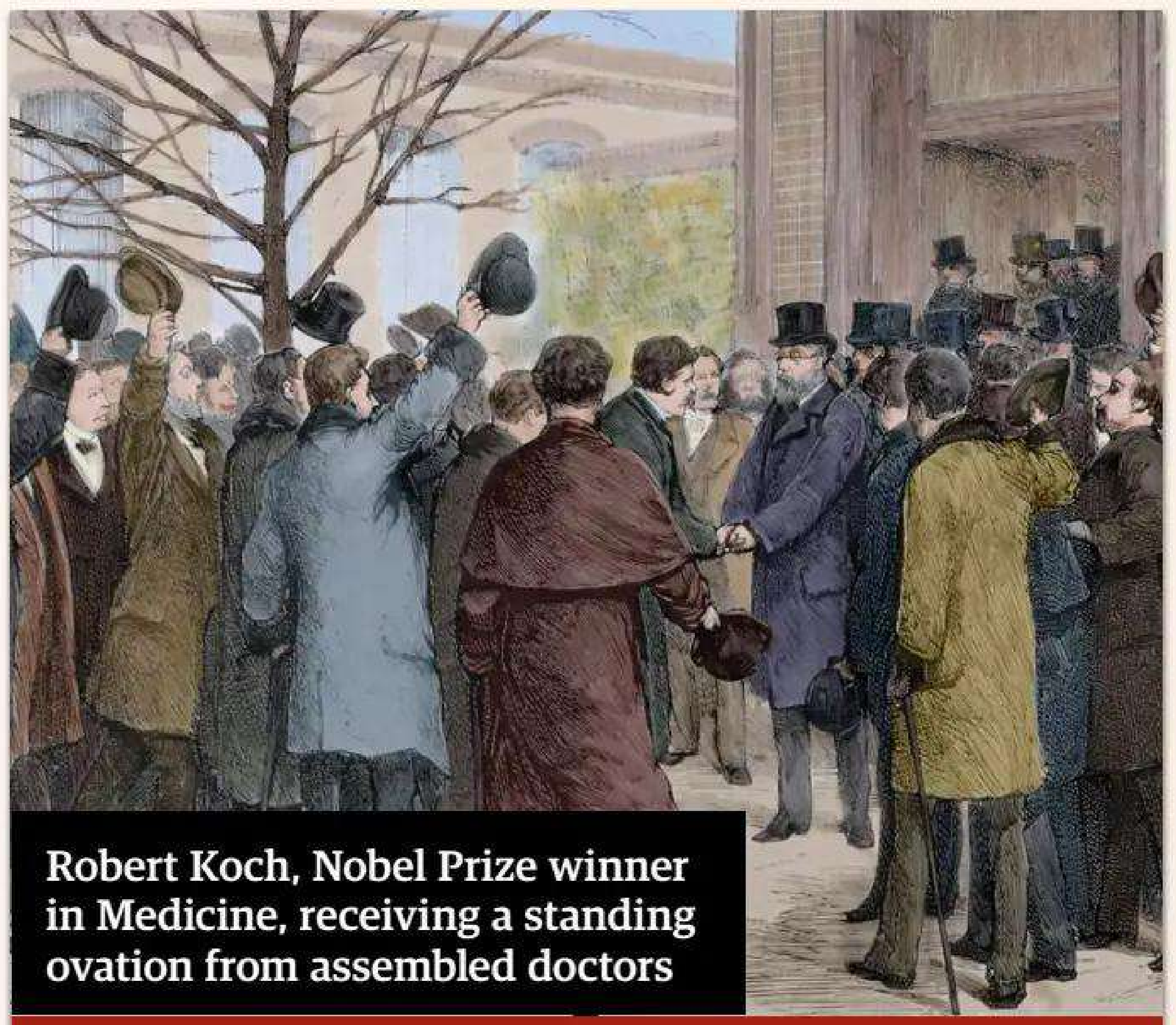
The poem The Griswold Vampire by Connecticut-based Michael J Bielawa was in part inspired by the Ray family story and the fate of Lemuel and his brother, reflecting both the belief that the dead were feeding on the living that spurred the Ray family to act, and the lure such tales hold over the living over a century later.

in a pot in a hole 15 feet deep, though it is unclear whether the family was saved from further loss. The Ransom family – one of the earliest to settle in Woodstock and with great reputation in the town – also found itself under threat of extinction in the first half of the 19th century. Son, Frederick, a promising university student, died of consumption in 1817, aged just 20 years old. Although his father had Frederick's body exhumed and his heart burned, his mother, sister and two further brothers subsequently perished from the same illness. One brother, Daniel, was spared: living into his 80s, he recorded the incident in his memoirs, stating that the belief behind the exhumation was that burning the heart of someone who had already died of consumption would save those left behind.

In 1810, Barnstead, New Hampshire, Reverand Enoch Hayes Place visited Moses Dennett, a tailor, who was suffering the familiar symptoms of consumption. It was after this visit that he was approached by Dennett's neighbours and asked to witness the exhumation of his daughter, Annie. Annie was the third daughter out of the 8 children of Moses and Betsey Dennett, dying in 1807 at the age of 21. Unfortunately, despite the exhumation, Moses Dennett died three months afterwards. A later example is from Connecticut, where in 1845 the bodies of brother Lemuel and Elisha Ray were exhumed and their bodies cremated in the hope of saving the rest of the family, the by now familiar belief behind the procedure.

Although all containing the same key components, there are interesting variations of the practice to be found. In Dummerston, the family Lieutenant Leonard Spaulding was in crisis. His daughter, Mary, died in 1782 at the age of twenty – yet another tragically young victim of tuberculosis. That was only the beginning, and, large though it was, the family was being wiped out at an alarming rate; over the course of 16 years, no less than 9 deaths had occurred, all from the dreaded plague of consumption, including that of Leonard himself. Reports of this story remark upon the belief that in such cases, if the graves of the deceased family members were opened, a vine would be found growing from one to another, working along the line. When the vine reached the grave of the latest to die, it was warned, another living victim would be claimed. The remedy was simple: along with the burning of the heart that has already been witnessed in other cases, the vine must also be broken in order to halt the terrible destruction. This was carried out in the case of the Spaulding family, and it could be said to have been a success: three further daughters escaped the disease that had taken the rest of their family, surviving into old age. This intriguing addition was also present

At least 80 New England "vampire" cases have been identified from the late 1700s to the late 1800s

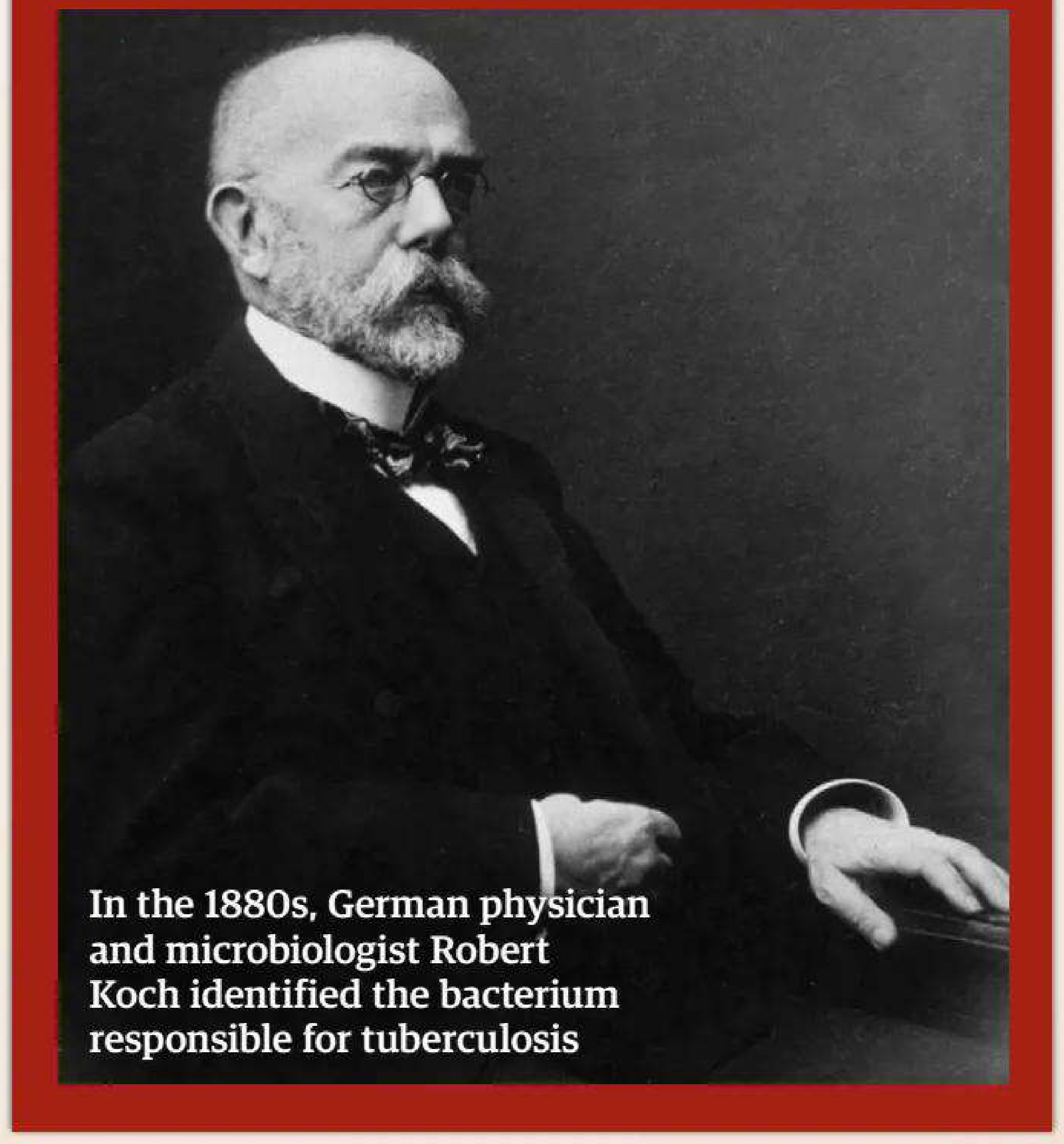

Robert Koch, Nobel Prize winner in Medicine, receiving a standing ovation from assembled doctors

A Terrible Killer

Tuberculosis – also known as consumption – was one of the most feared diseases of the 19th century, and far more deadly than any legendary vampire

With evidence of its existence from as early as 5000 BCE, tuberculosis was part of human history for thousands of years, and to be diagnosed with the disease was tantamount to a death sentence. Far from being a simple medical complaint, biblical sources claimed the disease as punishment, while the people of 19th century New England believing it to have a spiritual cause.

Symptoms included night sweats, fever, wasting of the body and loss of appetite and general health. Coughing, and eventually the spitting up of blood, were sure signs that the disease had taken firm hold of its victim. Attempted cures ranged from common sense fresh air, to the bizarre, such as milk from a pregnant woman, or seaweed under a sufferer's pillow. Despite the success of sanitoriums and the eventual understanding of the medical cause of the disease, it was not until the mid-20th century, thanks to the development of antibiotics and chaemotherapy that the spread of tuberculosis was finally slowed and then halted for good.


In the 1880s, German physician and microbiologist Robert Koch identified the bacterium responsible for tuberculosis

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Vampire in the Flesh

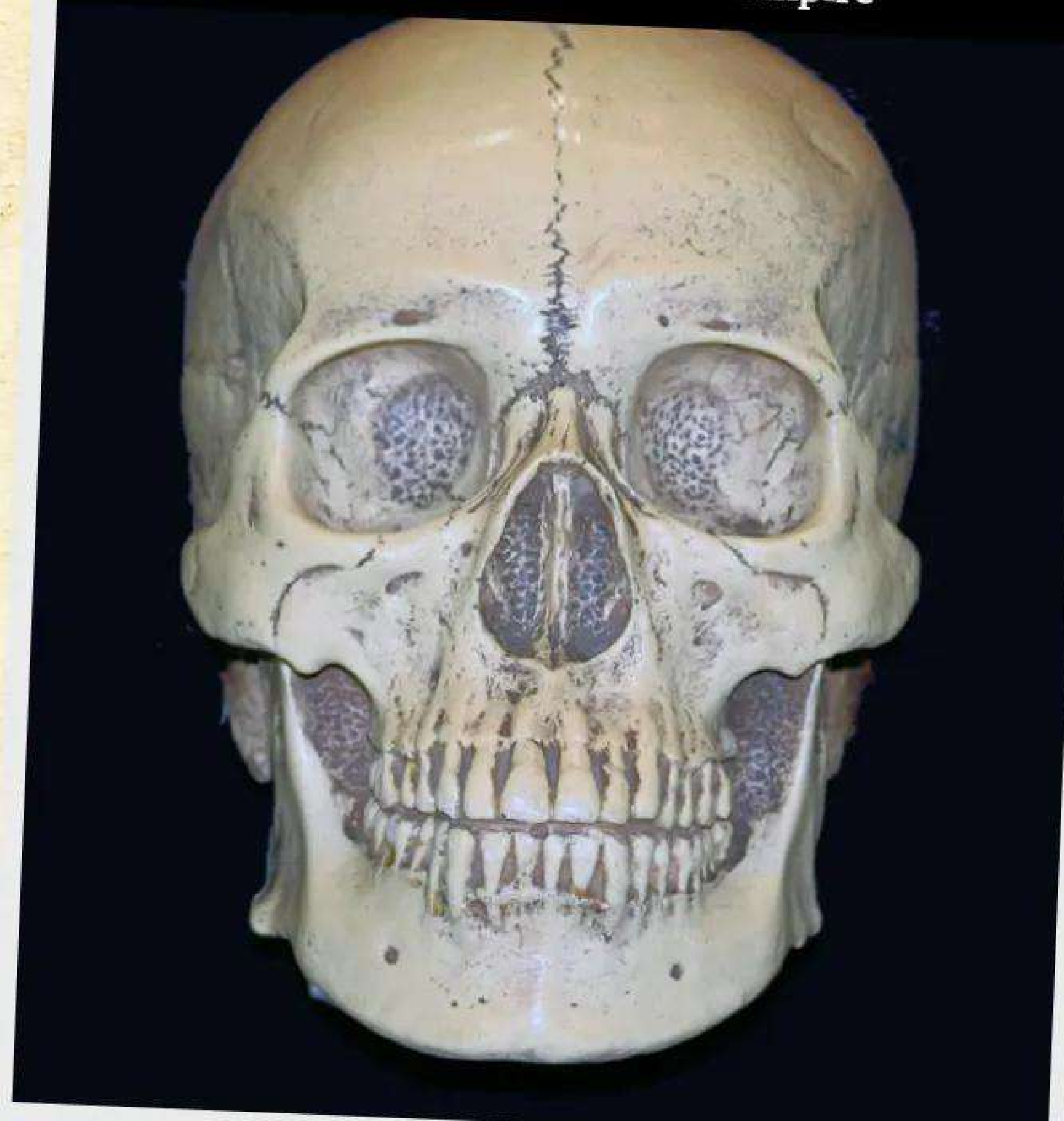
Exploring youngsters got more than they bargained for one day: but who was JB55 and was he a vampire?

Name: John Barber

Year of death: 1843

Age: 55

Perhaps due to the decomposition of his heart, JB55's skeletal remains were dismembered instead to break the hold of the vampire



The burial of the individual known as JB55 (due to the initials spelled out on his coffin lid in brass tacks) took place in the Walton family cemetery in Griswold, Connecticut. JB55 and the remains of those thought to be his wife (IB) and child (NB13) were discovered in 1990 when children playing in an excavated quarry discovered two human skulls, inadvertantly uncovering the long forgotten graveyard.

Buried in a wooden coffin lined with stone, JB55's remains had been disturbed after their original internment. His skull had been removed and placed on top of his chest, which had been broken open, and his thigh bones were positioned beneath his skull to create a "skull and crossbones" motif – a practice not uncommon when a corpse was a suspected vampire. The ribs showed the tell tale lesions that indicate consumption and it is likely that, following his death from tuberculosis, JB55's remains were exhumed with the intention of removing and burning his heart with the hope of halting the spread of consumption throughout a family and into the wider community, as seen elsewhere in the region. When it became clear that the body had decomposed too far for this to be possible, his head was removed and bones rearranged instead as a precaution to keep him from taking anyone else to the grave.

Dubbed 'The Connecticut Vampire', JB55's true identity remained a mystery for nearly 30 years until, in 2019, scientists at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Maryland finally identified him. Through Y-chromosomal DNA profiling and cross-referencing online genealogical data, it is now believed that JB55 was named John Barber and died in approximately 1843. John was at least 6 feet tall – the tallest and most muscular male buried in the cemetery – and skeletal analysis suggests he was a labourer, most likely a farmer who worked for the Walton family. A coffin buried beside John, labelled NB13, is believed to contain the remains of 12-year-old Nathan Barber, whose 1826 obituary mentions his father by name.

in a case in Willington, Connecticut. Another family, that of Isaac Johnson, was suffering in much the same way as the Spauldings. In this case, only two deaths had so far occurred, but the prognosis was not good: a third of those family members remaining were already ailing, and death was the likely outcome if the progression of the illness could not be halted. The graves of the two deceased were exhumed, and along with checking the bodies for signs of life, the graves were also searched for any telltale vines growing within.

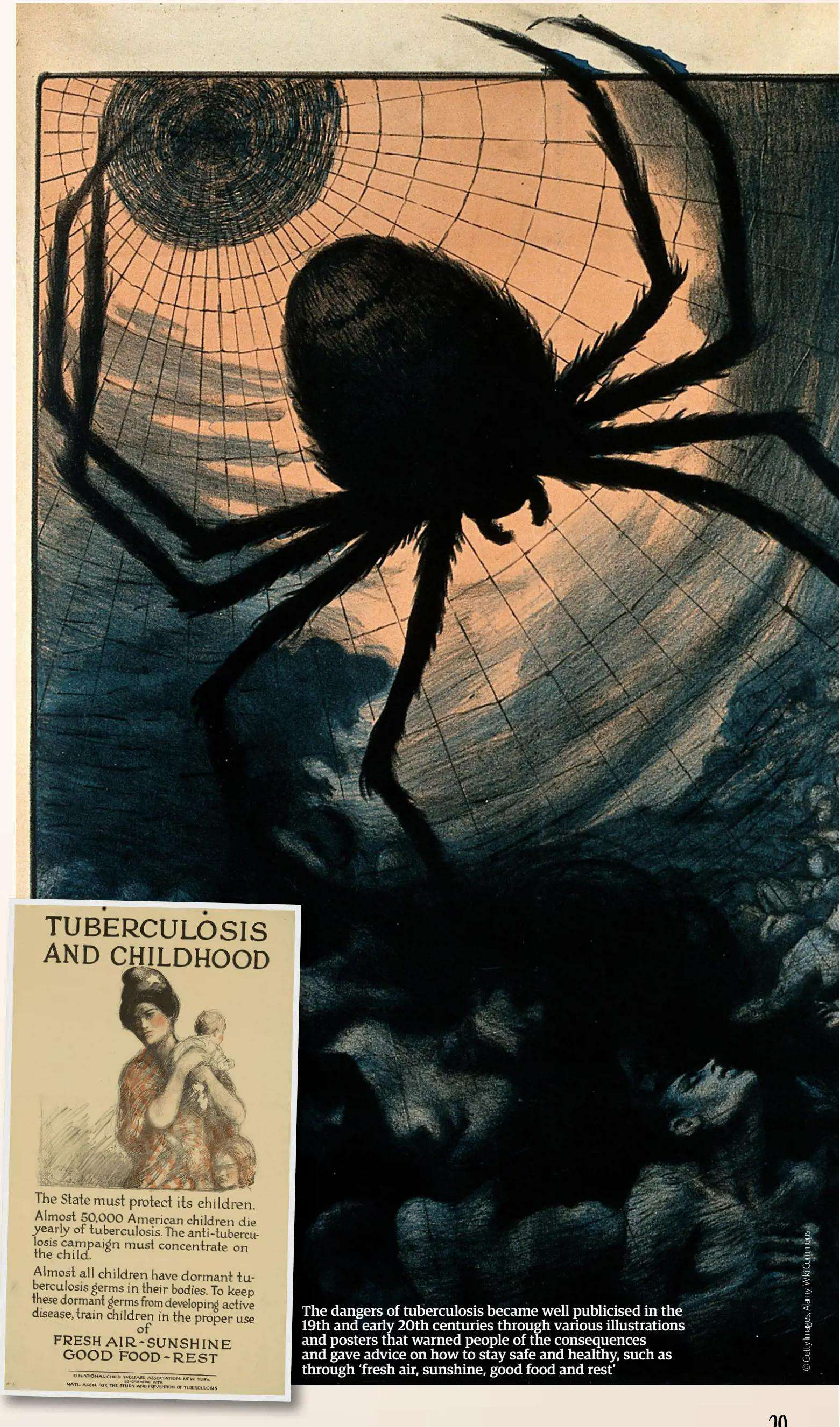
There are several theories for how the vampire "tradition" came to the shores of New England. One is that the idea of the "vampire" came with immigration, those colonists who made New England their home bringing with them European vampire lore. Linked to this is the importation of writings and images, that could likewise have helped disseminate such beliefs throughout the receptive population. Another explanation is that the colonists from Europe were influenced by those Native Americans with whom they came into contact, taking on the beliefs they encountered there. A third possibility is that the creation and development of the vampire tradition within New England occurred alongside but independent from any other influence. Instead it was a direct response to the situation of the time: the spread of consumption and the resultant death and contagion that went with it.

What conditions made the continuation of such beliefs and practices possible? The industrialization of New England provides the key, both to the belief in "vampires" and to the very disease the exhumations were intended to stop. The crowded, filthy and germ-ridden conditions

Sanatoriums sprung up across America and Europe, offering cures and a change of air for those suffering from consumption in which people now lived and worked were the perfect breeding ground for tuberculosis to thrive and spread, taking hold of a family and then a community in a deadly grip, refusing to relinquish it's hold. Industrialization and consumption therefore went hand in hand, "superstitious" ideas ironically used to combat a disease spread by progress. It has been suggested that when a society or population is experiencing a period of crisis, there is a need for a scapegoat or cause. A body that catches the attention of those within a community at such a time, is very often said to be the cause of the troubles, and this is strikingly clear in the cases examined across New England and beyond.

At the time, the vampire panic was sensationalised by the media and deemed dangerous superstition by city folk. The *Providence Journal* reported gleefully on the Mercy Brown case and the fact that the bodies of dead relatives were taken from their graves with the frontpage headline: "EXHUMED THE BODIES. Testing A Horrible Superstition In The Town Of Exeter". The Rhode Island newspaper later published a follow up titled "THE VAMPIRE THEORY". The articles sparked wider debates on the belief in vampirism and the story was picked up by Joseph Pulitzer who published highly dramatic accounts of the case in his *New York World*, leading to the story garnering global attention and even reaching the awareness of *Dracula* author Bram Stoker. Later reports, however, see the communal superstition and subsequent, seemingly extreme measures taken by these rural communities in a different light. They paint a picture of neighbourly assistance, love and concern – the exhumation and burning of the heart simply demonstrated the lengths a father like George Brown was willing to go to in order to save his remaining family members. Within rural communities such as Exeter, the bonds of both kin and friendship ran strong, and this was simply another outward expression of the support shared between the people who lived there, however incomprehensible that might appear to outsiders. The attempted treatment of consumption that makes us raise our eyebrows as modern day readers is best viewed through the lens of folk medicine and healing. There is strong evidence of a tradition of home remedies and treatment throughout New England, and it therefore makes sense that such would be the case in attempting to combat the aggressive killer that threatened so many.

For those in New England's rural areas (and indeed throughout much of the world), illness and disease were not the scientific, medicalised province they are today. Sickness came from supernatural origins, and therefore it made sense to look to the supernatural in turn, both



TUBERCULOSIS AND CHILDHOOD

The State must protect its children.

Almost 50,000 American children die yearly of tuberculosis. The anti-tuberculosis campaign must concentrate on the child.

Almost all children have dormant tuberculosis germs in their bodies. To keep these dormant germs from developing active disease, train children in the proper use of

FRESH AIR - SUNSHINE
GOOD FOOD - REST

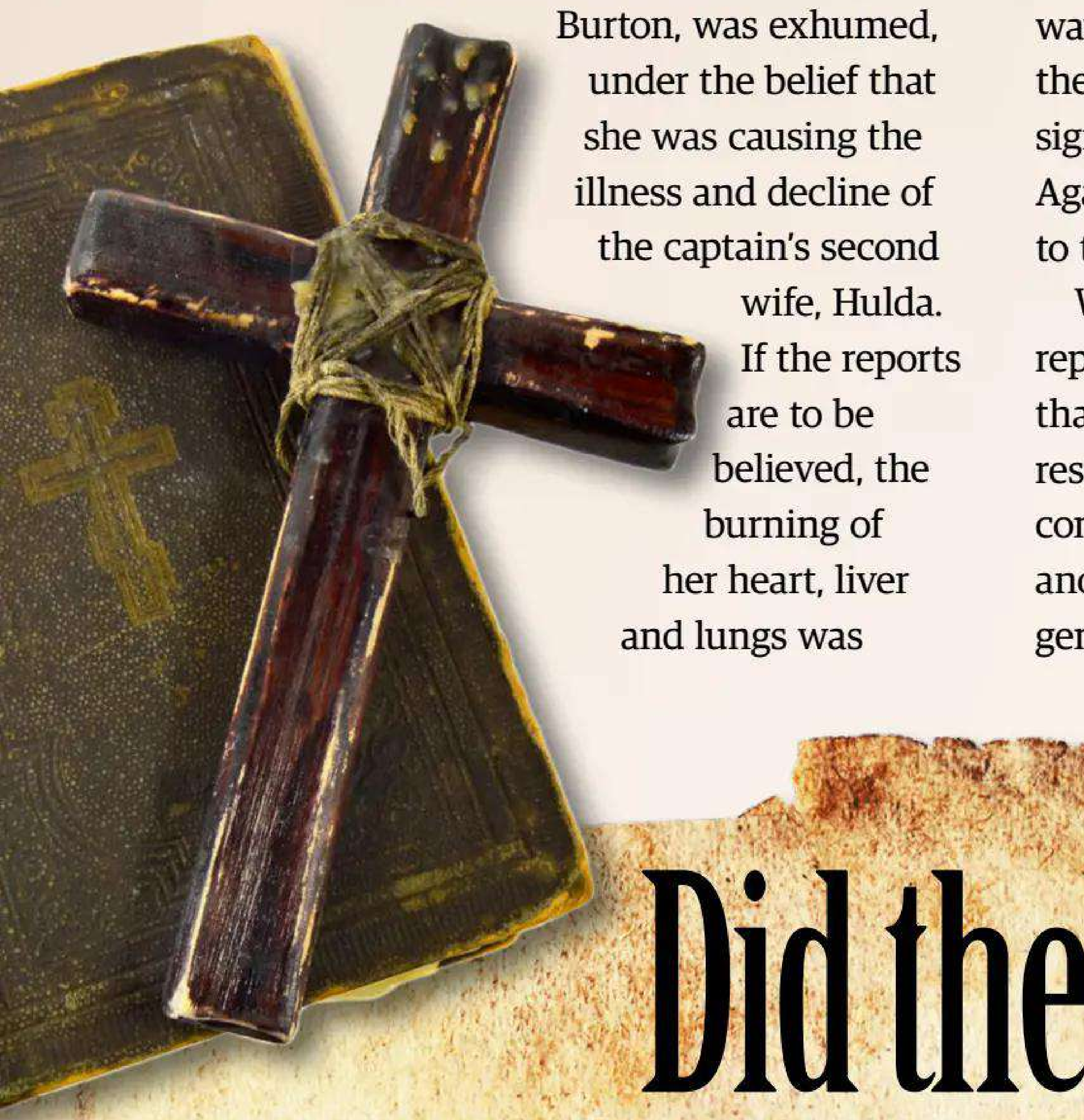
© NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE ASSOCIATION, NEW YORK
CO-OPERATING WITH
NATL. ASSN. FOR THE STUDY AND PREVENTION OF TUBERCULOSIS

The dangers of tuberculosis became well publicised in the 19th and early 20th centuries through various illustrations and posters that warned people of the consequences and gave advice on how to stay safe and healthy, such as through 'fresh air, sunshine, good food and rest'

© Getty Images, Alamy, Wiki Commons

for explanations and cures. Such beliefs were criticised by the economically and socially elite within New England, who considered themselves in a position of great superiority over their more "savage" rural neighbours. But it wasn't just ignorant country folk. In Vermont, those families who believed in the superstitions included some of the founders of the towns they represented and those in positions of power – a far cry from the image of superstitious and gullible countryfolk that is often presented.

Another surprise is that such practices weren't carried out under the cloak of darkness, hidden away from civilised eyes. On the contrary, there is resounding evidence that the exhumation and autopsy of bodies in these cases were sometimes carried out and witnessed by some of the leading members within a community. In Manchester, Vermont, where another early example took place in 1793. The body of Rachel, first wife of Captain Burton, was exhumed, under the belief that she was causing the illness and decline of the captain's second wife, Hulda. If the reports are to be believed, the burning of her heart, liver and lungs was carried out before the majority of Manchester's inhabitants. Those in attendance at the Corwin exhumation in Woodstock were said to have been the most important members of the community, with the ceremony itself being carried out by the selectmen of the village. The father of Abigail Staples sought – and was granted – permission to exhume his daughter by the Town council itself.



An intriguing link in the history of the vampire tradition throughout New England comes in the family of William Rose. In 1872, 20 years before the exhumation of Mercy Brown, the bodies of two of William's children were dug up, in the hope of preventing consumption taking the rest of the family. As in the other reported cases, William Rose found what he was looking for; the heart and liver of his children were preserved in a way that roused suspicions and the presence of blood was taken as a sign that they were feeding from the living. Again, the organs were burned and ashes returned to the grave, in an attempt to halt the illness.

William Rose was a man of influence and reputation within Exeter. It has been suggested that he may well have been one of the men responsible for convincing George Brown to consent to the exhumation of Mercy in 1892. In another satisfying link for those with an eye for genealogical connections, William's second wife, Mary, was a great granddaughter of none other than Stukeley Tillinghast himself. Although it could be said to be wishful speculation, given the pattern of stories being passed along the generations evident throughout the New England communities, it is not improbable that tales of the "vampires" of previous generations were passed on to the younger generations, along with the suggested ways to deal with them, thus helping to keep the tradition alive.

Nellie Vaughn's grave has been desecrated due to confusion with the legend of Mercy Brown

Were there really vampires in the traditional sense in New England? There is no evidence that those involved in any of the cases – from Sarah Tillinghast to Mercy Brown – actually used the term "vampire" to describe what they believed was to blame for their suffering at all. It was those outside of the communities involved – those reporting on the cases in an attempt to understand, and, in many cases, dramatise and sensationalise the events – but not by those at the centre of the tragedies themselves. The term "vampire" was used again and again in newspaper reports to support the misconception that this was a savage and ignorant superstition and as a way to minimalise the lived experiences of those involved and generate intrigue, shifting the emphasis of the story towards the supernatural. However, although the word itself was not used by those

Did the Dead Rise?

The case of Nancy Young illustrates how historical fact shifts and changes to become a supernatural legend

Name: Nancy Young

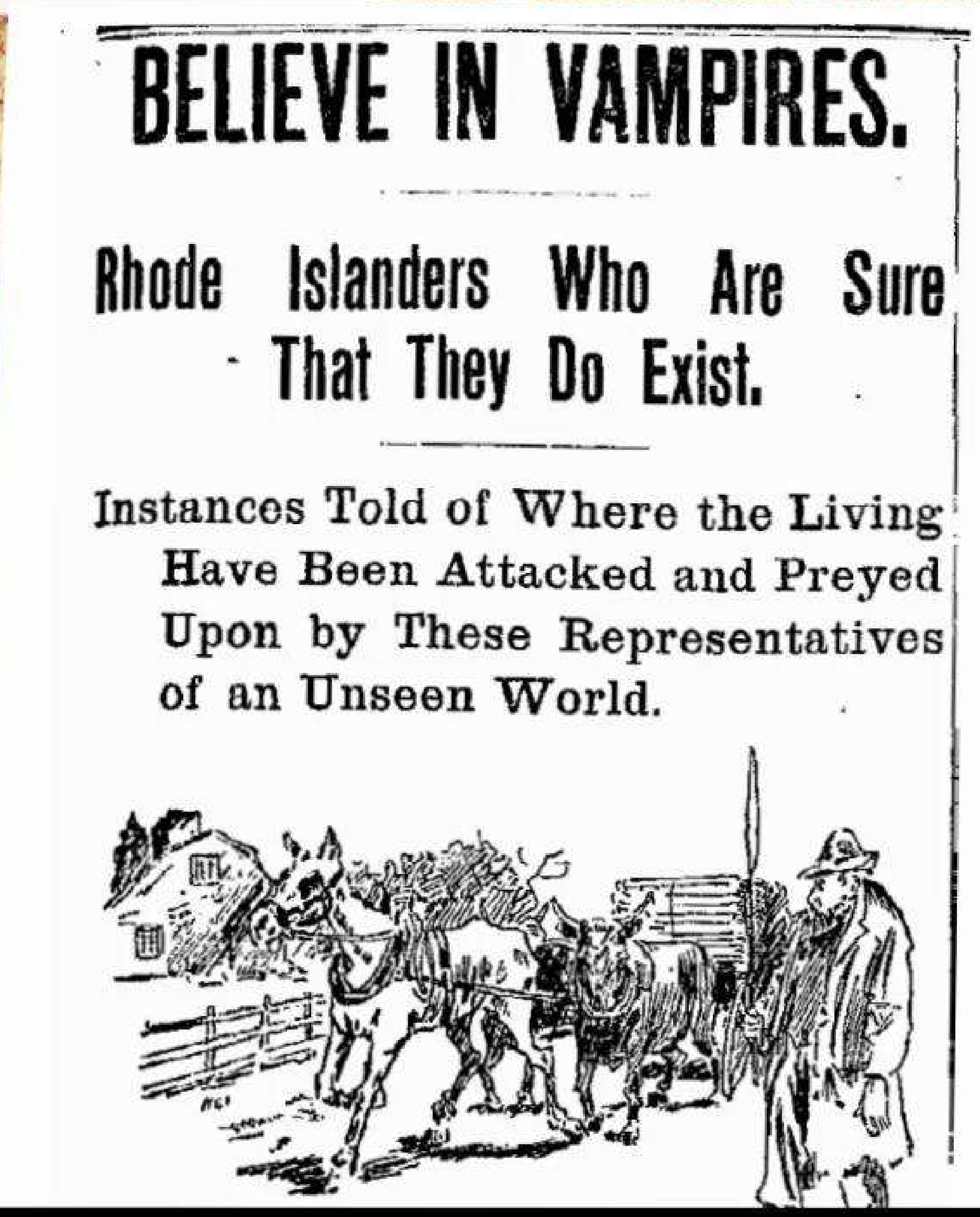
Year of death: 1827

Age: 19

Nancy was the eldest daughter of Captain Levi Young, settled in Foster, Rhode Island. Reported to be a bright and intelligent girl, well-liked and healthy, everything changed when she fell ill and went into a decline. Despite the best attempts of local physicians, Nancy could not be saved, and she died in April 1827. One of her several siblings had also fallen ill not long after Nancy, and young Almira was quickly declining into a similar state to her sister. When it became clear that others of Nancy's brothers and sisters were likewise starting to sicken, Levi Young took action.

Backed by his friends and local families, Captain Young had Nancy's body exhumed. There is no record as to the state of her body, but it was burnt to ashes. Rather than drinking the ashes themselves, it was believed by those gathered that the ill members of the family needed to inhale the smoke created by Nancy's cremation, and that by doing so, they would be well again. Despite their hopes for recovery, Almira succumbed, dying less than a year later, and several other children died in the years that followed. The youngest daughter, Sarah, appears to have been the only one to have escaped the strange disease – no doubt consumption – that had claimed so many of her siblings. Perhaps the supposed cure did her some good after all?

There was some speculation that water from the well on the Young property was to blame for the sickness that spread through Nancy's family, but this is not borne out by the fact that those who moved to the premises after the Young family were not troubled in such a manner.



BELIEVE IN VAMPIRES.

Rhode Islanders Who Are Sure That They Do Exist.

Instances Told of Where the Living Have Been Attacked and Preyed Upon by These Representatives of an Unseen World.

Outsiders viewed reports of vampire exhumations and cremations as outdated superstition, as shown by this typical newspaper headline

A legend has grown up around the story of Nancy, and like many such tales has become garbled in the telling. Sarah, not Nancy, is the first to die, and when the family return to visit her grave, the body is nowhere to be found. Things grow stranger still when the surviving family members start to dream of their departed sister; Sarah visits them each night, claiming the lives of her siblings, one after the other.

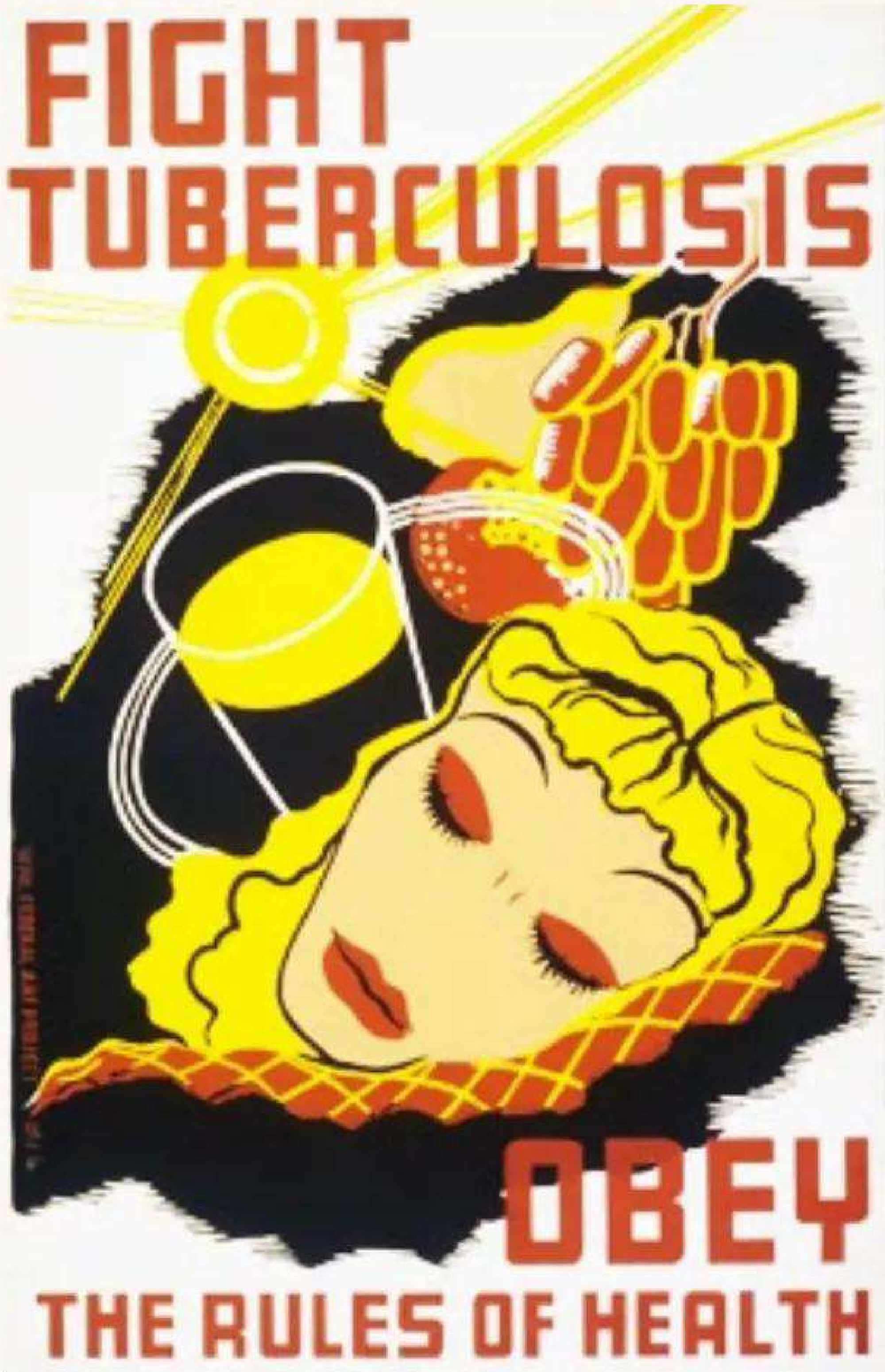
involved, there is no doubt that the beliefs of the dead having an deadly physical impact on the living and superstitious rituals displayed by the communities in order to stop it are indeed staples of vampire-lore the world over.

Various additions have been made to the tale of Mercy Brown over the years, reflecting the development and evolution of the vampire legend in popular culture. One version states that her body had turned over in the grave after death, a sure sign of undead activity. The blue light that is said to be seen over her grave also reflects the transmutation of her story, from a benign tale of folk healing to an eerie local legend. The tragedy experienced by Sarah Tillinghast has also accumulated additional supernatural lore, with members of the family reportedly complaining that they have seen Sarah within their home, this time as a ghost rather than a vampire. The tale of the Corwin family from Woodstock is yet another example of how the facts of a case can be turned into fiction and legend over time. Roughly a decade after the heart of the Corwin brother was burned and buried, it is said that an attempt was made to see what remained in the grave. Although those carrying out the excavation dug down 15 feet – to where there should have been some evidence of the burial of the ashes – the pot containing the ashes, along with the seven-ton block of granite covering it, were nowhere to be seen. Allegedly, terrible rumblings could be heard emitting from the site for several days following the excavation, along with a smell of sulphur and the sight of smoke – all the makings of a horror story right there!

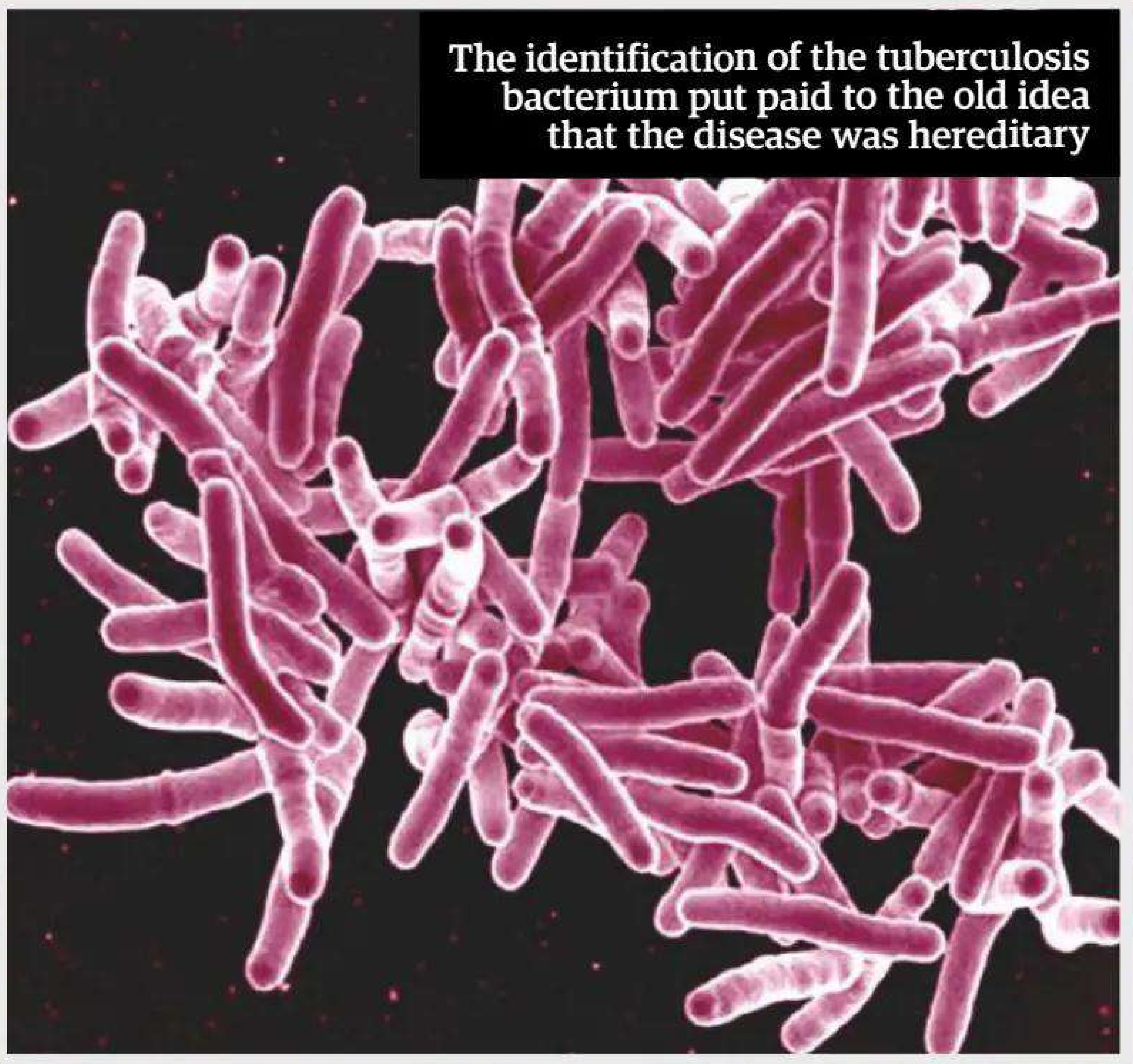
Despite the variations on the main theme, in all the cases throughout New England, the central belief remained the same: That the misunderstood contagion we now know to be consumption and its horrifying symptoms were caused by a dead member of the family draining the vitality out of the living from their grave.

Vampires, in any guise, are ordinarily the villains of the piece throughout legend and lore. However, in the real-life vampire cases of New England it could be argued that the roles are reversed. With their earthly remains continuously disturbed, death was far from the final rest hoped for – despite never having risen from their graves. From the 19th century exhumations until today, the burial sites of 'vampires' such as Mercy Brown, Frederick Ransom and Sarah Tillinghast are still visited, intruded upon and desecrated, with tokens from their graves collected and considered trophies. Their names are forever tainted, passed down in Northeastern US history as the ghosts and terrors of Halloween night. Yet, in a tragic turn of events, these so-called vampires were always the true victims of the story.

"It is not improbable that tales of the vampires of previous generations were passed along to the new, along with the suggested way to deal with them, thus helping to keep the tradition alive"



A mid 20th century poster from the Works Progress Administration, encouraging sleep, sunlight and good food as a means of combating TB


The identification of the tuberculosis bacterium put paid to the old idea that the disease was hereditary

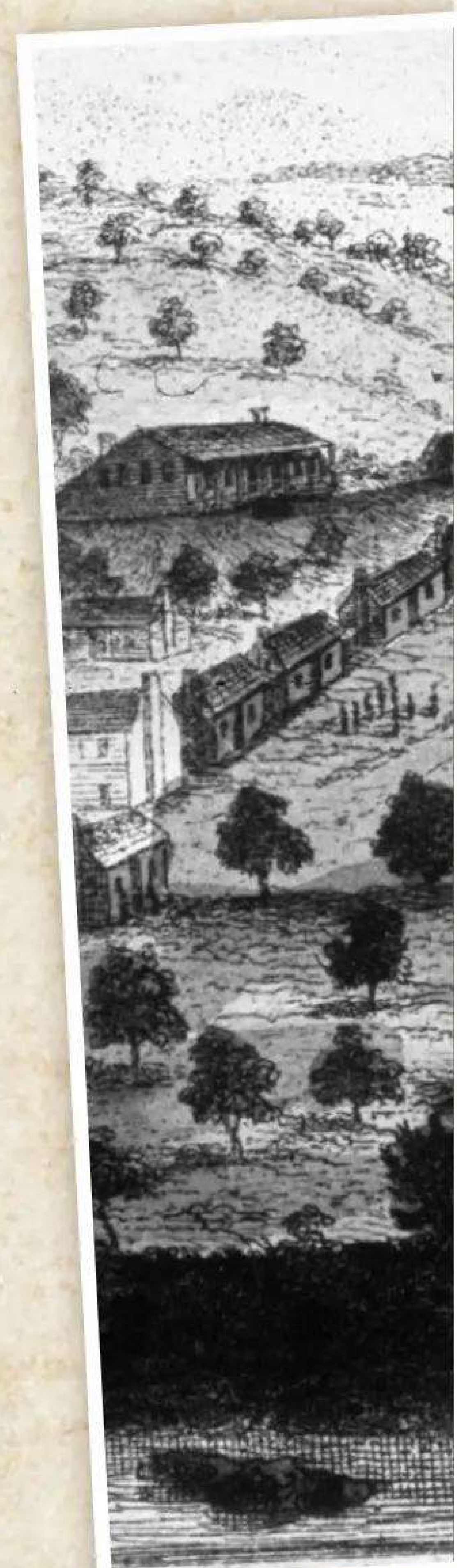
The lure of stories of vampires and the supernatural is strong: visitors to "vampire" graves keep the legends around them alive and embellish them with new details

WELCOME *to the* WICKED WEST

Thousands of souls journeyed to the Front in pursuit of the American Dream, but many found themselves trapped in a nightmare at the hands of these infamous killers

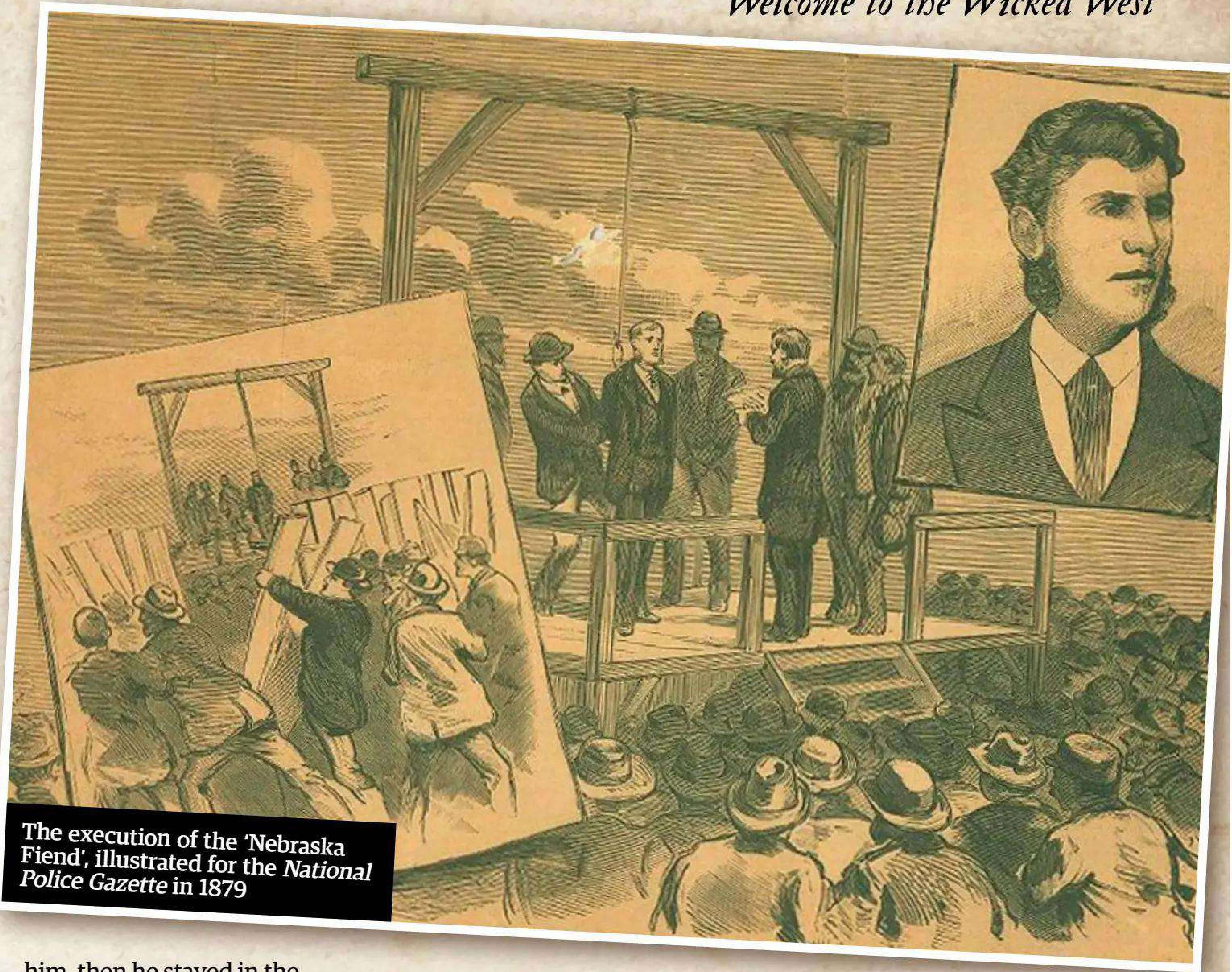
Written by Ben Biggs

For around 300 years, from the time of the first European settlers in the early 17th century up to the foundation of the last few States at the beginning of the 20th, Frontier America was a land of huge opportunity for many. Vast tracts of territory lay unclaimed across the continent, replete with untapped mineral resources, brimming with animals to hunt, timber to fell and fertile grasslands for farming. There was a good living to be made in this new world, but the land was also fraught with dangers: outlaws, cattle rustlers and Native American warriors, to name a few. Among those willing to take advantage of this relatively lawless land there prowled some for whom murder was just another way to make a living – and others who made it their hobby…



The Nebraska Fiend

YEARS ACTIVE 1876–1878



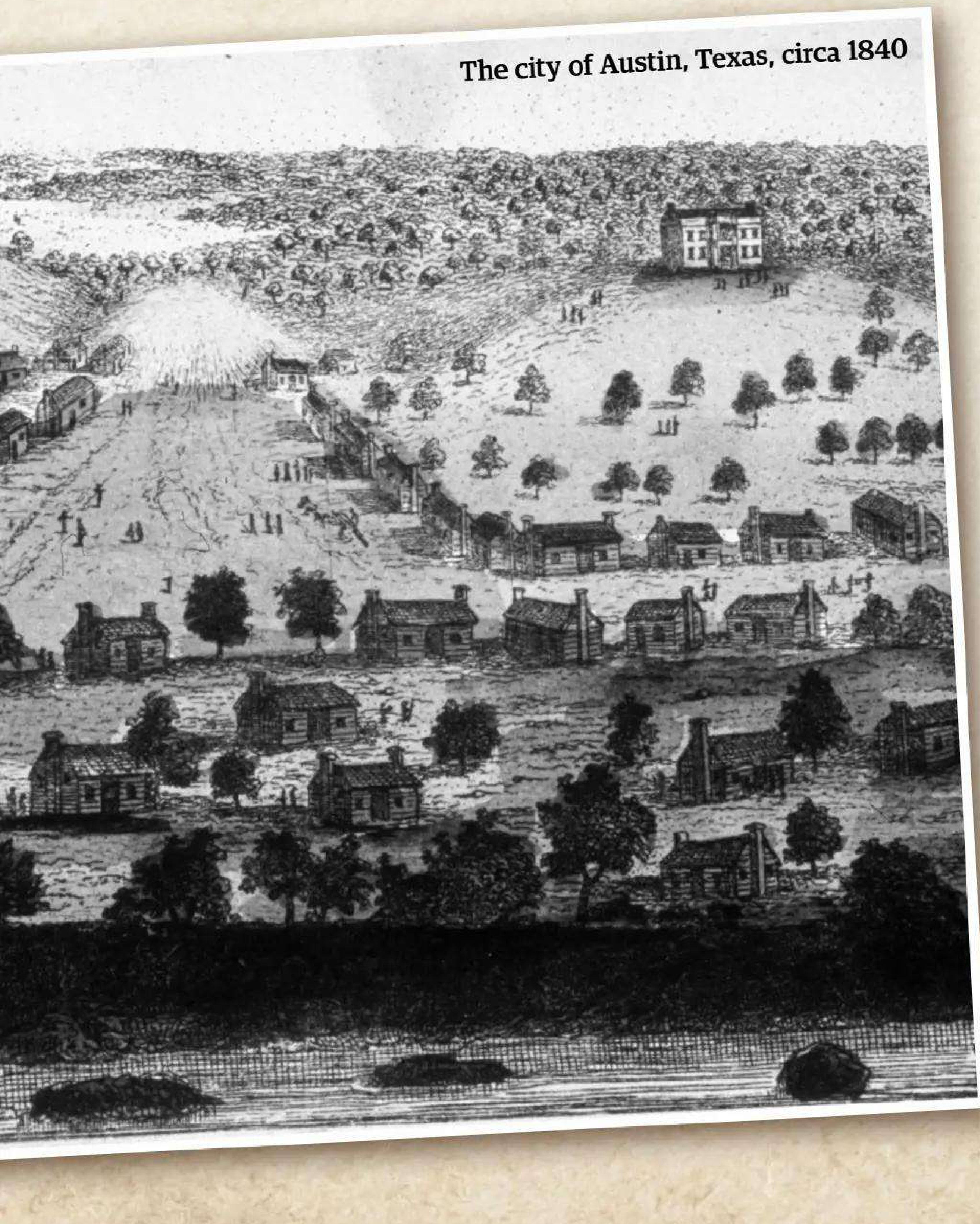
The execution of the 'Nebraska Fiend', illustrated for the *National Police Gazette* in 1879

Stephen D. Richards was an unsavoury character of low moral fibre who had a habit of stealing or cheating people out of their hard-earned possessions – and he was not above murdering them in order to cover up or facilitate his crimes. The writers of the day have Richards down as a charismatic and handsome man, which was a useful cover for a dangerous serial killer, both in the commission of a crime and escaping the authorities. This charming facade has recently drawn comparisons between Richards and arguably the world's most infamous serial killer, Ted Bundy.

Richards is suspected of murdering nine people, although he was only convicted of five. Four of those victims were all members of the same family: the wife and children of notable train robber Jasper Harlson. After a stint in jail for larceny, Richards turned up at the Harlson's homestead in Nebraska in October 1878. Old man Harlson was on the run and his wife, Mary, had agreed to sell the property to Richards for $600. Whether or not Richards actually handed over any cash is another matter. Within two weeks of arriving at the Harlson homestead he managed to woo Mary into marrying him, then he stayed in the house with her three children long enough to hatch a plot to secure the property for himself.

Early in the morning of 3 November, while the rest of the household was asleep, Richards snuck out and dug a large hole, then returned to the house and proceeded to beat Mary and her children to death with a heavy smoothing iron. He scrubbed the blood from the floor and his clothes, ate breakfast and then dropped the bodies into the hole.

After his arrest, and prior to his conviction for Harlson family murders in January 1879, he told the *New York Daily Herald* that he, "cared no more for killing the children than if they had been young jack rabbits". He was sentenced to hanging and was publicly executed on 26 April 1879.



The city of Austin, Texas, circa 1840

Servant Girl Annihilator

YEARS ACTIVE 1884–1885

In a case that remains unsolved, seven women and one man in the city of Austin, Texas, were killed – and many others brutally wounded – by a bloodthirsty murderer weilding an axe.

Majority of the victims were domestic servants, earning the killer the moniker the Servant Girl Annihilator and resulting in the case being referred to as the Servant Girl Murders by the press. Also known as the Midnight Assassin or the Austin Axe Murderer, the killer entered homes in the middle of the night and attacked the victims in their beds, often dragging them outside to mutilate and assault them. Six of the women had a sharp object inserted into their ears and the assailant left behind valuable evidence, including the murder weapons and bloody footprints that appeared to be missing a toe.

The killings stopped abruptly after the final two victims, Eula Philips and Susan Hancock, were murdered on Christmas Eve, 1885. Both women were white, which galvanised the authorities into a renewed effort to catch the killer, but to no avail.

The case was highly publicised and is often cited as one of the earliest documented examples of a serial killer operating within the United States, despite the concept of a habitual murderer with a modus operandi that connected each of their murders not being fully understood at the time.

Three years later, when Jack the Ripper began terrorising London, a journalist for the *Atlanta Constitution* suggested the Servant Girl Annihilator could be responsible for the murders occuring almost 5,000 miles away. An unlikely theory that captured the public's imagination nonetheless.

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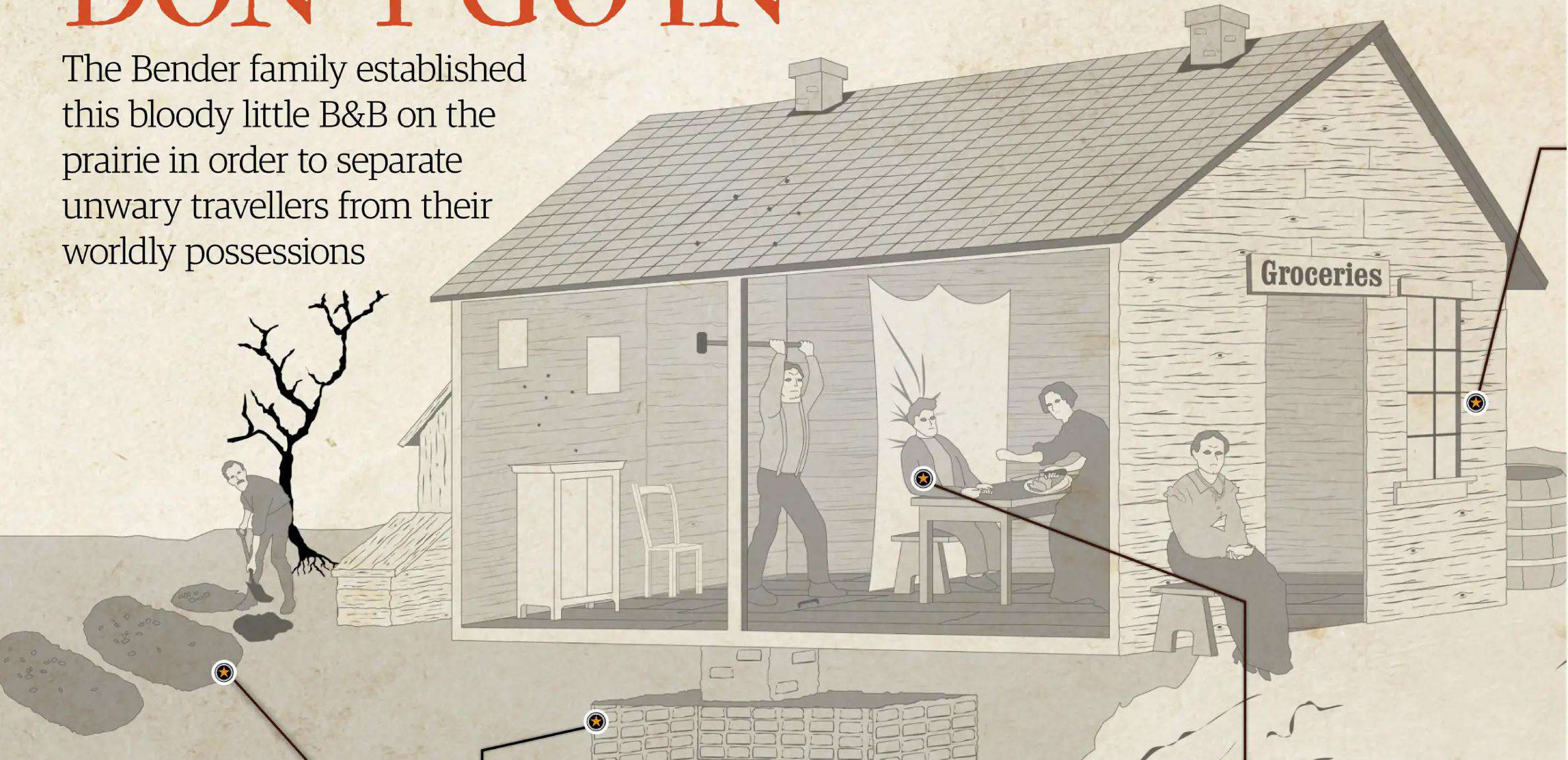
THE BLOODY BENDERS

YEARS ACTIVE 1872–1873

DON'T GO IN

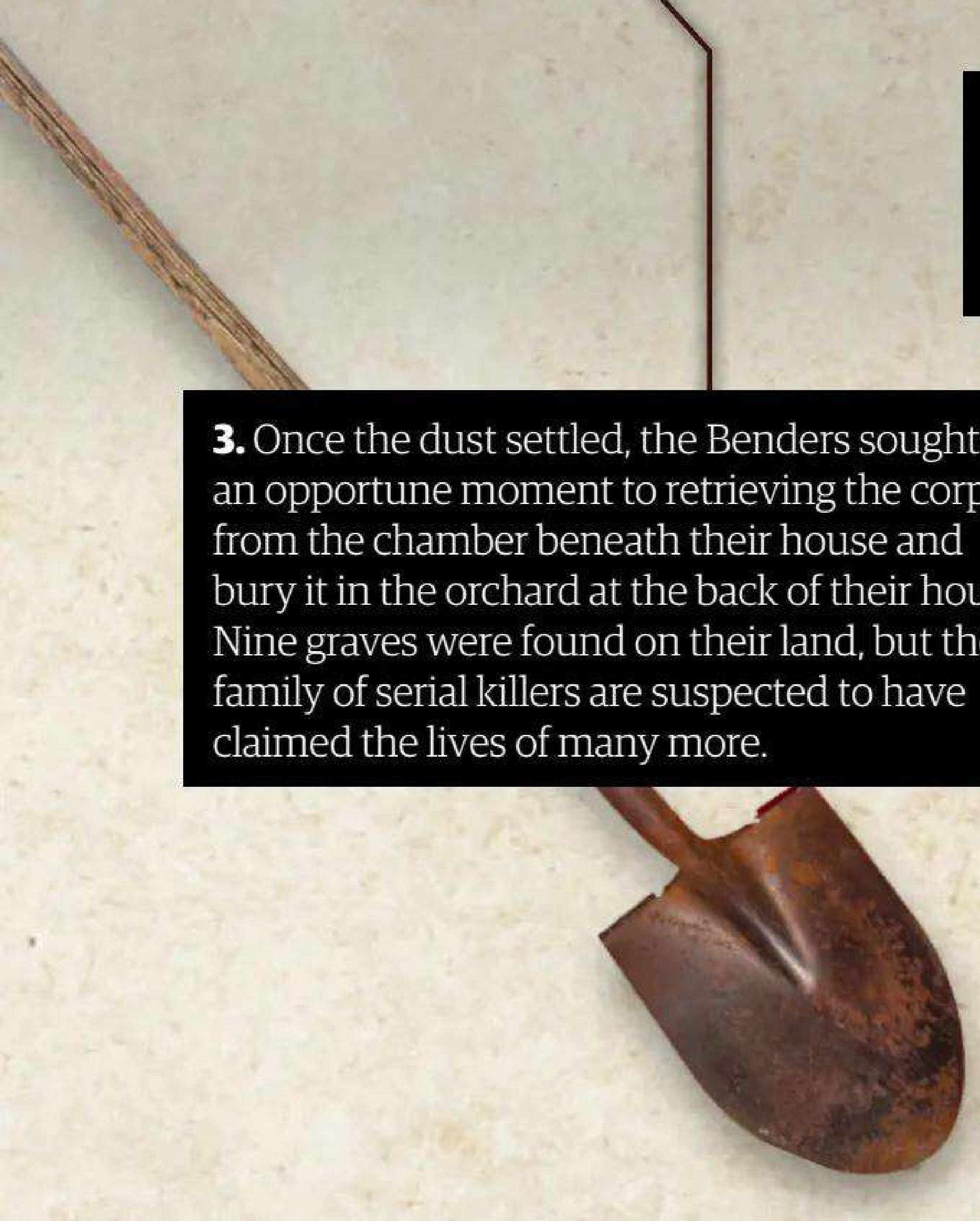
The Bender family established this bloody little B&B on the prairie in order to separate unwary travellers from their worldly possessions



1. Young Kate Bender was a psychic medium and would charm their victim, inviting them into the house to have their future read. They would be seated at the head of the table as the 'guest of honour' in front of a curtain behind which one of the Bender men would hide before striking the victim with a lump hammer. Kate or Ma Bender would then slit their throat.

2. The trap door was just behind the guest's seat. After they were dispatched, the victim's body was relieved of valuables then tipped off the chair and thrown down the open trap door into a brick-lined chamber.

3. Once the dust settled, the Benders sought an opportune moment to retrieving the corpse from the chamber beneath their house and bury it in the orchard at the back of their house. Nine graves were found on their land, but the family of serial killers are suspected to have claimed the lives of many more.



Kansas was still sparsely populated and at the edge of the frontier in 1870, though there were plenty travelling across the state in search of a new life. So when a family of European immigrants turned up in Labette County that October, nobody batted an eyelid as the four members of the Bender family set up a general store and a boarding house, where weary travellers could stay called the Wayside Inn. Though there are questions over whether the Benders were family in anything but name, John Bender Sr. was considered the patriarch, Elvira 'Ma' Bender his wife, with the 20-something-year-olds, John Jr. and Kate, allegedly their adult children.

Less than six months into the Benders moving in, people started disappearing or turning up dead. A certain Mr Jones had his throat slit and head smashed in at a mining claim in Drum Creek in May 1871. Two more bodies were found by the creek in February 1872, and several more people mysteriously disappeared that same year. Locals began to get suspicious: it wasn't unheard of for people to be murdered in these parts – it was the Wild West, after all. But it was suspiciously happening much more often since the Benders had arrived. And when Dr. William Henry York went missing in the spring of 1873, the authorities finally started to pay attention.

> *"Two more bodies were found by the creek, then several more people mysteriously disappeared"*

4. Over a dozen bullet holes were found in the walls and ceiling of the Bender house, so it seems likely that not all of their victims died without putting up a fight.

One of Dr. York's brothers was a state senator, the other was an army colonel. Colonel York assembled 50 men and made for Labette County, arriving at the Benders' property in March 1873.

After York questioned the Benders he spoke with the townsfolk, who agreed to issue search warrants on all the properties between Big Hill Creek and Drum Creek.

When the search party arrived at the Bender property, they found it completely abandoned. Nothing could prepare them for what they discovered inside: a trapdoor with a blood-soaked chamber below and shallow graves in the orchard containing the remains of more than 11 people. The Benders were never found, but it's likely that they continued their murderous ways elsewhere.

Hell's Belle

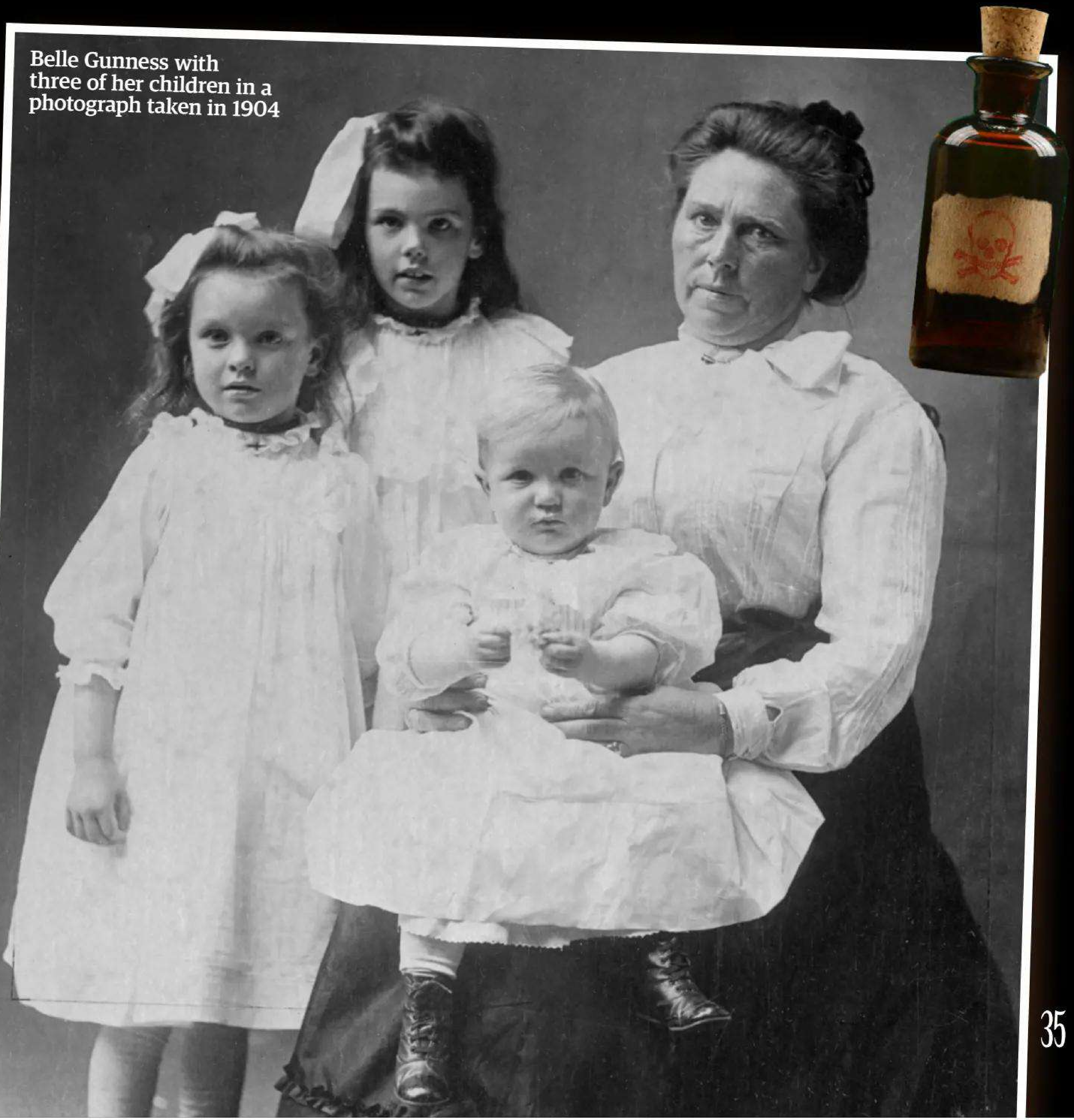
YEARS ACTIVE 1884–1908

Born Brynhild Paulsdatter Storset in central Norway, 1859, Belle Gunness emigrated to the US in 1881 and married Mads Sorensen in Chicago in 1884. She then embarked on a career in murder, killing her spouses and children in order to collect their life insurance and earning the nickname Hell's Belle. The house and the candy store that Mads and Belle owned was first to go, burned down soon after their marriage. Then their two children both died from intestinal problems, followed by Mads in 1890, who died of a cerebral haemorrhage. In each case, Belle collected the money from the insurance policies placed on their lives – two policies in Mads' case, and it was likely no coincidence that he had died on the final day before one policy expired and the first day that a new policy became active.

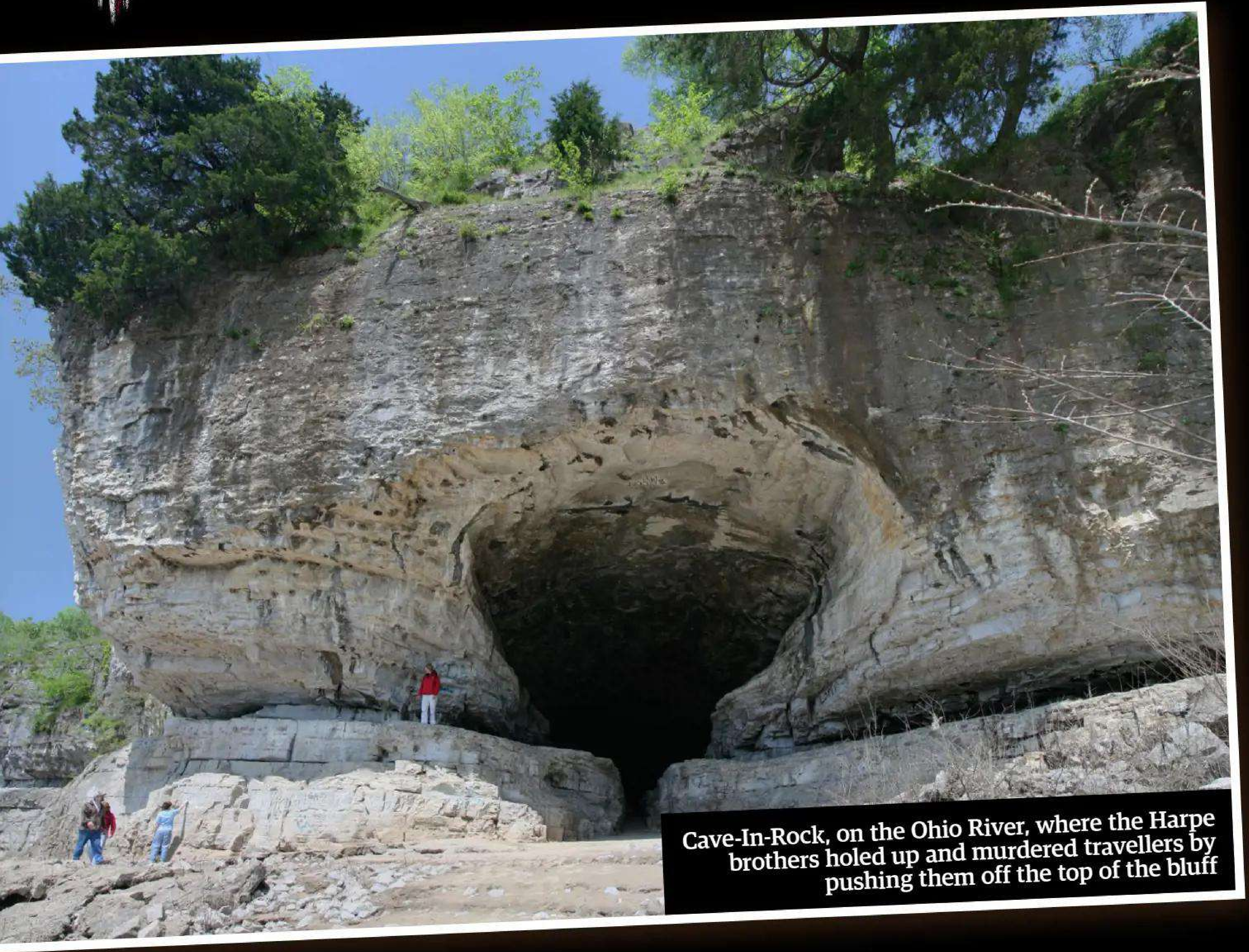
In 1902 she married Peter Gunness, murdering his baby daughter a week after. Eight months later, she murdered Peter by smashing his skull with a meat grinder, reporting to authorities that the grinder had simply fallen on him.

Somehow, she got away with murder, again. Encouraged by her success, from 1905 she began placing marriage ads in newspapers to find new victims, turning the murdering of men and children for money into an industrial process.

Belle disappeared in 1908 after her farmhouse in La Porte, Indiana, burned down. When investigators explored the ruins they found the headless body of a woman, the bodies of Belle's three children and later, the remains of at least 11 other people buried in shallow depressions on the land. These bodies had been dismembered and covered with caustic quicklime: someone had wanted to get rid of these corpses fast. The body of the headless woman was identified as Belle and she was promptly declared dead despite a doctor testifying that Belle was significantly taller and heavier than the deceased woman. One theory is that she had faked her own death by burning the farm down and planting the headless body of a woman she had killed in the house in order to throw investigators off the scent. If the body wasn't Gunness' and this was all part of a devious plan to get away with fraud and serial murder, it worked. Belle was never seen again.



Belle Gunness with three of her children in a photograph taken in 1904



Cave-In-Rock, on the Ohio River, where the Harpe brothers holed up and murdered travellers by pushing them off the top of the bluff

The Harpe Brothers

YEARS ACTIVE 1797–1804

Long before they were robbing, raping and murdering under their own auspices, brothers Micajah 'Big' and Wiley 'Little' Harpe were Tory militias in the American Revolution. Ostensibly loyal to the British, they carried out atrocities against Patriot colonists in North Carolina in the name of King George III – although these murderous criminals were motivated by greed and dark appetites rather than any affiliation to crown and country. The British gave them no weapons, uniforms or even pay, so the Harpe brothers had to rob the living or loot battlefields to survive.

Their crimes peaked long after the end of the American Revolution, when the brothers had settled in Tennessee and changed their surname to Harper, to sound more like that of a Patriot than a Loyalist. Micajah became Joshua and Wiley became William. They stole livestock from neighbours, and would murder people at the drop of a hat, ripping their chest cavities open and filling them with stones so as to weigh them down in rivers or pools. They didn't even flinch at killing children and infants. Following their escape from a Kentucky prison, they tortured and murdered the young son of a man who had aided authorities in their capture. It seems that in their desperation to evade the law their cruelty soared to new heights.

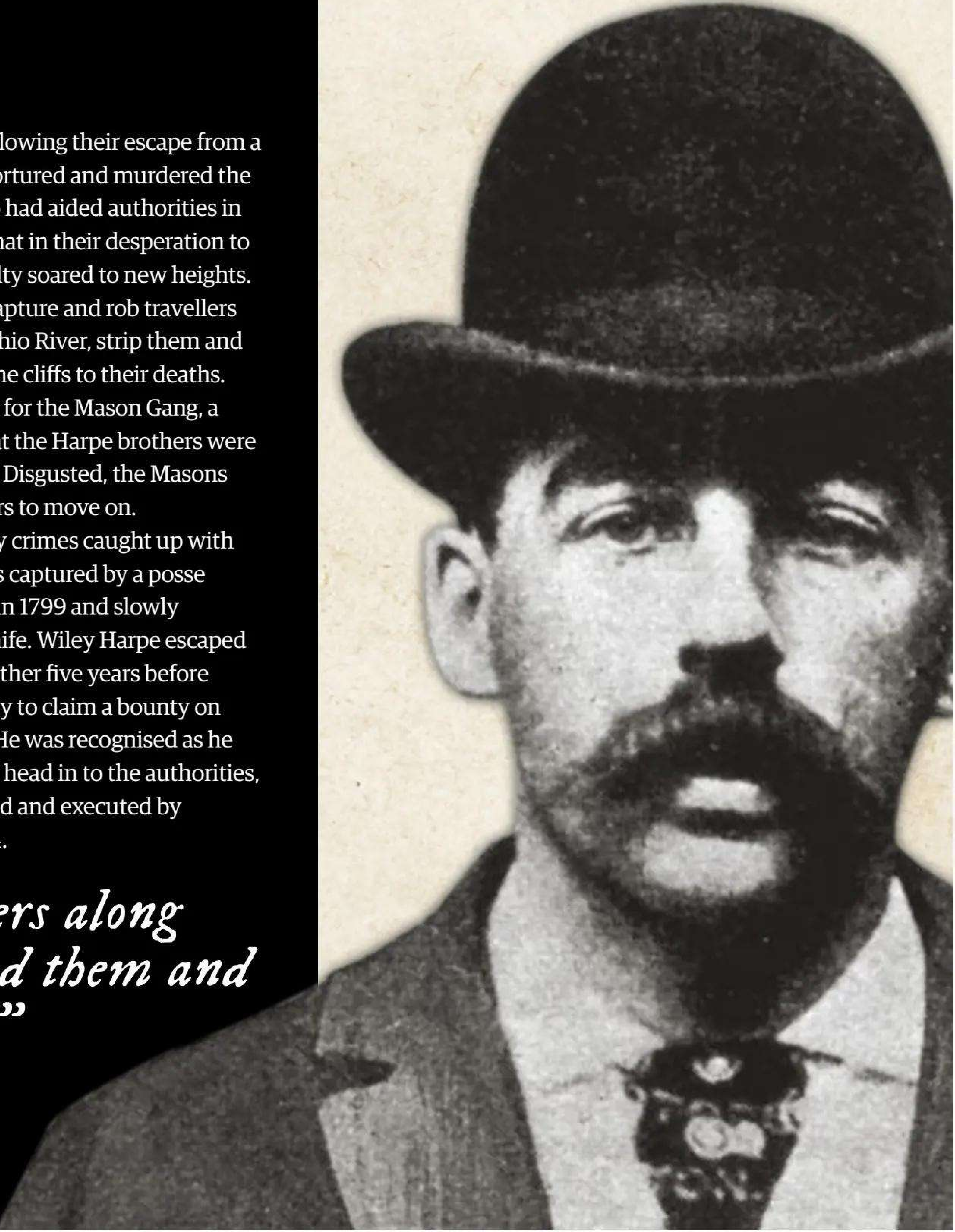
The brothers would capture and rob travellers along the banks of the Ohio River, strip them and force them to jump off the cliffs to their deaths. This was too much even for the Mason Gang, a group of river pirates that the Harpe brothers were staying with at the time. Disgusted, the Masons forced the Harpe brothers to move on.

Eventually, their many crimes caught up with them Micajah Harpe was captured by a posse hell-bent on vengeance in 1799 and slowly beheaded with a long knife. Wiley Harpe escaped and managed to last another five years before he had the audacity to try to claim a bounty on one of the Mason gang. He was recognised as he handed Samuel Mason's head in to the authorities, arrested on the spot, tried and executed by hanging in January 1804.

"They captured and robbed travellers along the banks of the Ohio River, stripped them and forced them to jump to their deaths"

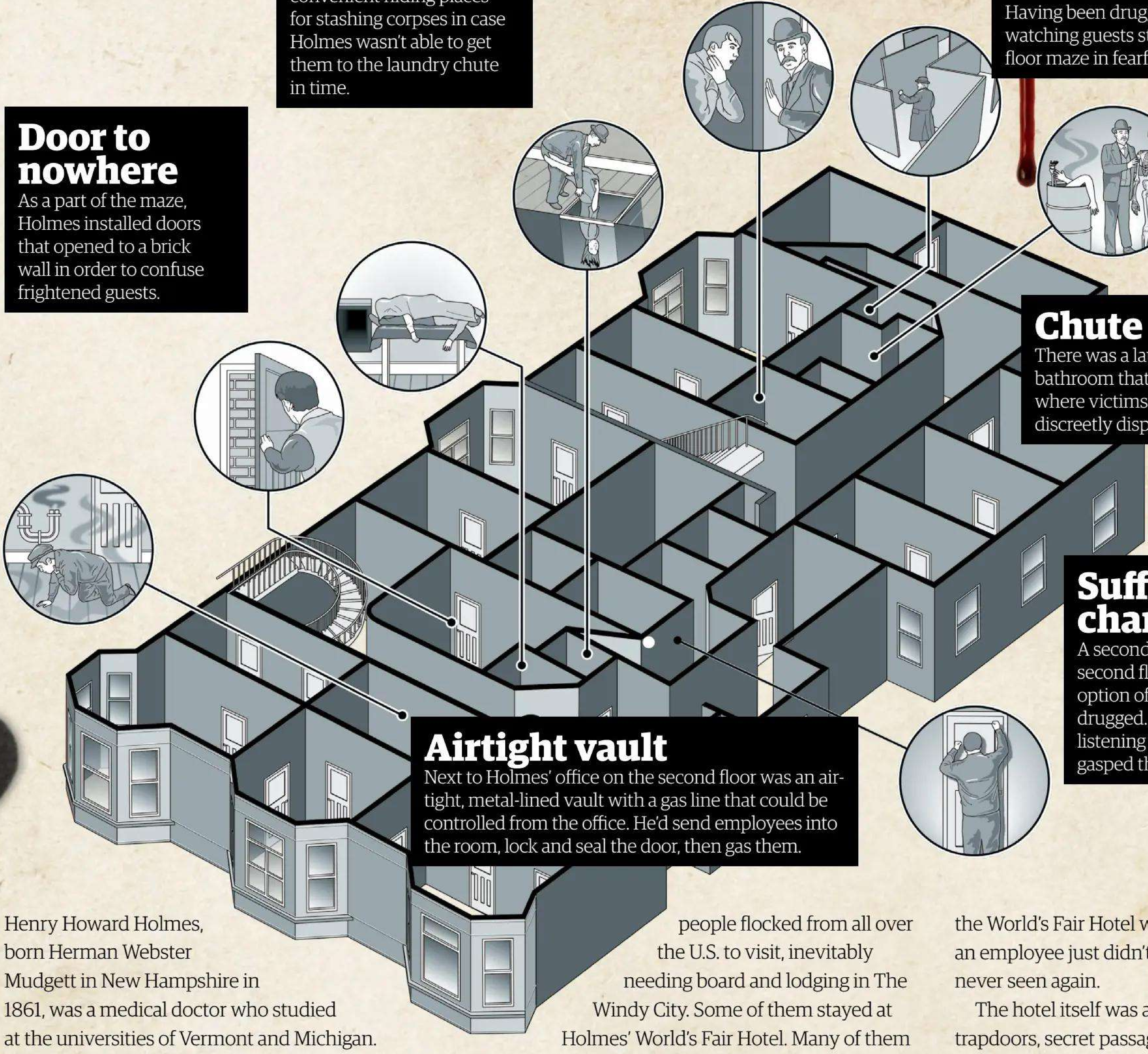
MURDER HOTEL

Holmes' World's Fair Hotel was deviously constructed; a Salvador Dali nightmare designed to confuse and trap guests who had been earmarked for slaughter



H.H.HOLMES

YEARS ACTIVE 1886–1894



False walls
Secret cavities provided convenient hiding places for stashing corpses in case Holmes wasn't able to get them to the laundry chute in time.

Trap doors
Hotel rooms had trap doors that guests could be dropped through into the basement.

Hotel maze
Having been drugged, Holmes would enjoy watching guests stumble around his second-floor maze in fearful confusion.

Door to nowhere
As a part of the maze, Holmes installed doors that opened to a brick wall in order to confuse frightened guests.

Chute
There was a laundry chute in the bathroom that led to the basement, where victims could be quickly and discreetly disposed of.

Suffocation chamber
A second airtight room on the second floor gave Holmes the option of suffocating guests he'd drugged. Holmes enjoyed listening at the door as they gasped their last breath.

Airtight vault
Next to Holmes' office on the second floor was an airtight, metal-lined vault with a gas line that could be controlled from the office. He'd send employees into the room, lock and seal the door, then gas them.

Henry Howard Holmes, born Herman Webster Mudgett in New Hampshire in 1861, was a medical doctor who studied at the universities of Vermont and Michigan. He was, at various points in his chequered career, a drugstore general manager, a hospital worker and an entrepreneur. He was also a con man, fraudster, a violent husband to his spouse Clara Lovering. But most notoriously, by the latter years of his life, he had become a cold-blooded serial killer who constructed a hotel dedicated to the industrial-scale slaughter of its unsuspecting patrons.

Holmes built and opened his hotel in time for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Expo was wildly popular, and people flocked from all over the U.S. to visit, inevitably needing board and lodging in The Windy City. Some of them stayed at Holmes' World's Fair Hotel. Many of them didn't leave alive.

In his twisted genius, Holmes hired and quickly fired contractors in the construction of his murder hotel, so that no one person became familiar with its layout.A drugstore and concessionary shops were placed on the ground floor, while the basement and the second floor was where hotel business was conducted - that is to say, the business of murdering guests, people who were a threat to his livelihood and anyone Holmes didn't like. His employees had to take out a life insurance policy in which Holmes was the sole beneficiary. Naturally, staff turnover at the World's Fair Hotel was high. Every now and then, an employee just didn't turn up for work and was never seen again.

The hotel itself was a maze of blind corridors, trapdoors, secret passages known only to Holmes and airtight rooms that could be filled with deadly gas. In the basement was an incinerator and drums filled with acid. There was also a dissection table that Holmes used in the processing of body parts for sale to local medical schools.

Holmes was eventually caught after conning a fellow con man who knew about his hotel of horrors and decided to shop him to the authorities. He was arrested in November 1894 and hung in May 1896. When his murder hotel was searched, it was estimated that anything from 27 to 250 unfortunate people had been 'processed' in his basement.

© Wikimedia Commons

Voodooists believe there are two worlds: the visible and the invisible, or the natural and the supernatural

An altar highlighting the African and European religious influences on Louisiana Voodoo

Origins of Louisiana Voodoo

Louisiana Voodoo is an offshoot from Haitian Vodou, the older West African Vodun, and is distinguished by its own set of specific innovations and rituals

Written by Martyn Conterio

New Orleans is an American city unlike any other. Famous for its cuisine, music and festivals, in the late-20th century it came to be known widely as 'the Big Easy', reflecting the locals' penchant for a good time and unruffled nature. But New Orleans' past as a centre for the slave trade and its lurid associations with Voodoo - many think it an evil cult - means the Crescent City (another nickname bestowed upon the place) boasts a darkness few other cities in the nation can match. Chicago and New York had their gangsters, Los Angeles its movie stars, but New Orleans boasted a secret world primed by supernatural energy, a land of Voodoo kings and queens, people to be respected and sometimes feared. A tormenting hex can be worse than a belly full of lead.

Almost everything we know about Voodoo usually comes from films, and Hollywood has been very selective about which aspects of the religion to focus on, misrepresenting rites and rituals as something heathen and blasphemous, sometimes involving human sacrifice, satanic black magic and - in the Haitian version - zombies, those brought back from the grave and forced to work on the plantations and do their master's bidding, their souls trapped, their bodies controlled by a wicked bokor. Voodoo as represented in the movies is tantamount to devil-worshipping. The secretive bayou setting, the rhythmic pounding of drums, the crackle of torchlight, shadowed bodies swaying in blasphemous displays of demonic possession, led fevered imaginations to interpret these things as sacrilegious rites. In Christian minds, Voodoo is satanic and closely associated with witchcraft, necromancy and other black arts. HP Lovecraft wrote in *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928), that the sinister cult at the centre of his tale was "more diabolic than even the blackest of the African Voodoo circles." Very often, Voodoo's political and spiritual roots are ignored in favour of racist prejudice and plain ignorance.

As with Haitian Vodou, Louisiana Voodoo's roots lie in the grotesque slave trade and the African diaspora. Forcibly exiled from their homelands and treated as subhuman, they were worked to death, discarded and replenished with a new intake. The South – a landscape bewitched by gothic atmosphere and moods – is permanently haunted by the ghosts of the plantations' dead and their extraordinary legacy is Louisiana Voodoo, a greatly misunderstood religion like its equally infamous Caribbean cousin.

Founded in 1718 by the French, New Orleans became a pawn in European empire manoeuvrings. The Spanish eventually took it from France and the British even attempted an invasion. Due to the Saint-Domingue slave revolt of 1791 and the founding of the first black western republic (Haiti in 1804), the French led by Napoleon Bonaparte, worried about war with the British, abandoned the former colony and then sold New Orleans and a gigantic tract of territory stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to southern Canada. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase brought New Orleans into the fold of the United States, but European and African influence left its mark in the people, architecture, language and religion. For instance, the city gave admittance to gens de couleur libre (free people of colour), meaning African culture and Vodou grew exponentially and formed a specific part of the melting pot culture. The celebrated birthplace and home of jazz, the port was also the entry point into US lands for African and Afro-Caribbean slaves, who, like some gens de couleur libre, brought with them the syncretic religion known as Haitian Vodou, a system of ancient rites and beliefs which intermingled with exposure to Roman Catholicism. Haiti is the most famous Voodoo-practising country on the planet. As the saying goes: the country is 85 per cent Roman Catholic and 110 per cent Vodou. The island's history has coursed a sad trajectory from heaven on Earth to poverty-stricken hell, due to centuries of political strife.

Because African rituals were forbidden and seen as a threat (slave owners feared Vodou), practitioners found in Roman Catholic iconography and teachings a way to incorporate western religion into their own ancient belief system. If caught in worship, they were whipped. If they prayed during the whipping, owners were even more incensed – fearing a curse – and sometimes killed them outright (or threatened to). In South Carolina, a 1739 uprising by Congolese slaves led to reprisals by lawmakers. Although Vodou played no significant role in the rebellion, the 'Negro Act of 1740' banned drums, horn and 'other loud instruments', the kinds of equipment used in ceremonies. Slaves were also forbidden to learn to write or congregate in groups.

Vodou dates further back in time than the 2,000-year-old story of Jesus Christ – to 6,000 years – with its origins in Vodun, a complex religion of West African countries such as Benin (where Vodun is the state religion). Vodun has its root in the word 'vodu', translated in the Fon language as 'spirit'. With regional variations, the Fon, Ewe, Yoruba people of west Africa believe in Nana Buluku – the divine creator – with her two sons, Lisa and Mawu, represent the sun and moon. Not Unlike Christian teachings of God, Nana Buluku is seen as unknowable, leaving human trials and tribulations to be overseen by Vodou

Iwa are contacted and consulted for advice by practitioners and worshippers who are seeking guidance in their lives

"Vodou dates further back in time than the story of Jesus Christ – to 6,000 years"

Baron Samedi

Despite his frightening façade, the skeletal Voodoo spirit is a charismatic healer

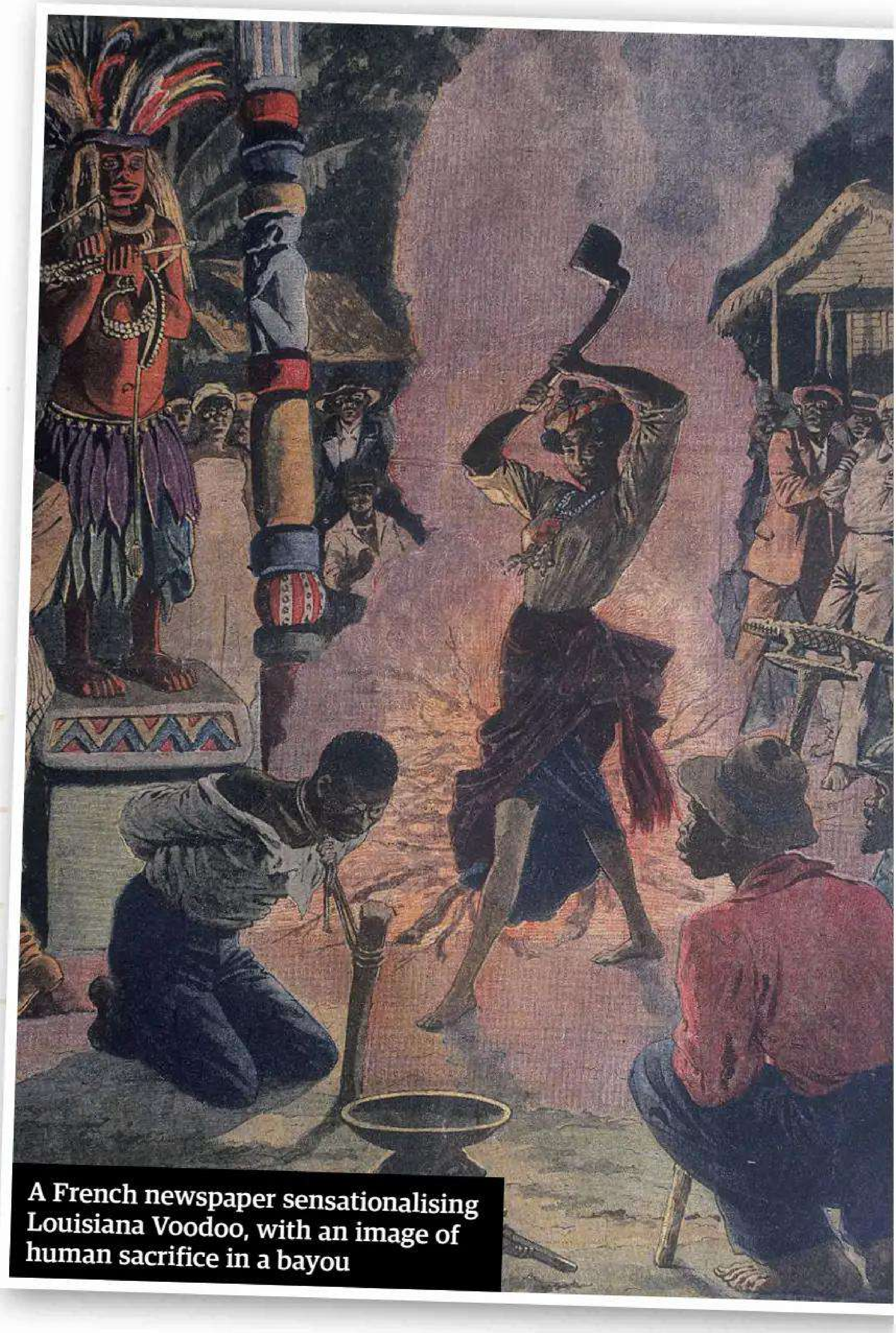
Baron Samedi is one of – if not the most – iconic of Voodoo spirits, partly thanks to a character named Baron Samedi in the James Bond adventure, *Live and Let Die* (1973), the Iwa's extravagant look and the vital role he plays in the Vodou religion. Haitian dictator, François Duvalier, aka Papa Doc, imitated characteristics of the underworld god, such as speaking in a nasal tone and always wearing black and sporting sunglasses, to keep his subjects frightened and in the spooky belief he was Baron Samedi incarnate.

Samedi guards over the underworld and the souls of the dead. He greets the dead and takes them to Guinee. There is no hell in Vodou, only a kind of waiting room (Guinee), which souls must pass through, before being reunited with their ancestors. Samedi – named after the French word for Saturday – is known for his love of rude jokes, being a bit of a trickster and a liking for cigars and white rum. With his top hat, cane and skeleton face, he cuts an imposing figure, though he is not malevolent.

Samedi is syncretised with 'St Expedite', a saint of murky origins, who has an association with Mardi Gras, though Baron Samedi and St Expedite are not syncretised in Haitian Vodou.

LORDE DA MORTE

Baron Samedi figurine on sale in a shop in New Orleans



A French newspaper sensationalising Louisiana Voodoo, with an image of human sacrifice in a bayou

Congo Square

This open space was an essential hub for African American spiritual and cultural expression

Early 19th century New Orleans had a municipal code for slaves. It was instigated long before, in the 18th century, by the French, and was continued during the city's Spanish period and after the Louisiana Purchase, and known as the Code Noir. Compared to other parts of the US, Louisiana Creoles were not as strict in enforcing assimilation on slaves, allowing their culture to take root in the city's fabric. One part of this Code Noir allowed slaves Sundays off and by 1817, a patch of land to congregate in, which today lies in the Tremé neighbourhood. This designated area became known as Congo Square.

Every Sunday, slaves and gens de couleur libre would hang out, sell snacks such as deep-fried rice cakes coated in sugar, dance and play drums. The weekly gatherings became an attraction for white citizens and tourists, too, who would look on at the vivid spectacle and marvelled. Although the slaves and others were heavily restricted and monitored, the place thrived and its association with Voodoo, legend has it, came about because after the sun sank low, Voodooists would gather – led by grand dame Marie Laveau – to commence and partake in rituals.

(spirits), and there are numerous assortments to worship. Vodun and its Caribbean and American offspring do not recognise a distinction between what we might call the sacred and the profane, between the natural and supernatural, or select groups (clergy). Anybody can communicate with the spirits, after undergoing the required learning.

Iwa are connected or associated with a natural power source, such as water deity, Yemaya

At a glance, Vodun looks to be diametrically opposed to forming any kinship with Roman Catholicism. The cosmology of Vodun – with its myriad spirits (known as loas or lwas) seems totally at odds with Catholic teachings about heaven and hell, salvation or damnation. Vodun, Haitian Vodou and, by extension, Louisiana Voodoo is far more interested in a cyclical relationship between life and death, with a focus on metempsychosis (the transmigration of the soul). In Catholic tradition, possession by spirits is seen as an evil interaction and a direct assault and threat upon a person's soul, whereas in Vodun, Haitian Vodou and the Louisiana version, it's a key focal aspect of the ritual and ceremony, a way of channelling and communing with ancestors, the possessed person consciously allowing the spirit in. There is no fear of the dead. The lwa who divines access between spirits and worshippers is Papa La-Bas (syncretised with St. Peter).

From the horrors of slavery sprung an attempt to reclaim a culture and heritage. The coast of western and central Africa was prime hunting ground for slave traders. Once clasped in irons and shipped thousands of miles across the Atlantic, attempts were made by slavers to dehumanise people, by robbing them of individuality and freedom. Slave owners thought allowing workers to keep hold of their traditions and culture could lead to rebellion and uprising. The development of Vodun into Haitian Vodou allowed slaves to take part in their heritage and culture, while creating a new form of worship based on exposure to Catholicism. Here, then, religious belief was also an act of political defiance.

As Vodun is monotheistic, the new syncretic vision was indeed compatible (despite a legion of differences) with Roman Catholicism's belief

To this day, Congo Square remains a focal point for African-American culture and celebration

in one god. Loas - and their function as figures to offer prayers to - were akin to the Catholic saints, so the switch wasn't too difficult. With no scriptures or artefacts, Vodun was developed clandestinely and served as psychological relief and a prime source of spiritual strength to slaves. Vodun, Haitian Vodou and Louisiana Voodoo are essentially about healing and experiences of transcendence. The emphasis is on rituals, incorporating song and dance into proceedings. The body is a medium and vessel for communing with lwas and the dead.

Vodun spread and entered different territories, other Caribbean islands, the coast of South America and mainland USA, the variations in rituals and beliefs allowed for distinct regional offshoots to come into fruition. In Haiti, creators such as Nzambi or Nana Buluku became Bondye (based on the French 'Bon Dieu' meaning good god) and the loas became known as lwas, the spirits becoming a mythology involving warring nations and families. These lwas have connections to Roman Catholic saints, such as snake deity Li Grand Zombi's association with Saint Patrick. This latter figure - Li Grand Zombi - would have a major role, when Haitian Vodou spread to - New Orleans and Louisiana, transforming into 'Voodoo'. One piece of paraphernalia, above all others, was seized upon as an abomination with exclusively malevolent intentions: the voodoo doll.

There is a historical basis for the voodoo doll's bad reputation, though one subsequently aggrandised. Associated with curses, manipulation and bad vibes, this totem springs from the Fon people of Benin and has been linked to Kongo's nkisi (plural: minkisi), which means "things which do things". Minkisi are containers housing spirits of the dead and can be used by the living for a host of reasons (including harming people). In Haitian Vodou, these figurines are known as pwen. Voodoo dolls became a prominent - if misunderstood - icon in Louisiana Voodoo in large part due to the most famous Voodoo queen of all: Marie Laveau, a devout Catholic and Voodoo practitioner who helped the religion take some interesting turns.

As Voodoo made landfall in North America, Native American influences, European black magic and Louisiana folklore left their mark on the religion, bringing what is known as hoodoo into existence. Hoodoo - also known as rootwork - is the practice of making potions and charms from mixtures of roots, bodily fluids and herbs. Botanical

Orleans · Voodoo · Luck

Voodoo dolls and their function in the religion have been greatly abused by Hollywood movies

A window display in the famous French Quarter in New Orleans, showing the crass commercialisation of Voodoo

knowledge essentially trumps any specific religious tenet, although hoodoo considers the Bible to be the best available grimoire (a book of spells) for its followers and the practice is founded in the slave trade and slaves' exposure to Christianity. Hoodoo doctors created their own belief system from all sorts of potions – such as foot track magic, often used to banish or bring bad luck to a person by sprinkling 'hot foot powder' onto their doorstep. Hoodoo was primarily practised by Afro-Americans, and is connected to and based on the older Vodun.

Marie Laveau became a powerful and influential figure in New Orleans, developing and promoting the traditions into the wider community, including the white elites of society. She is responsible for the boom in the voodoo doll, the religion's move into superstition, the use of gris gris (a West African Wolof word for a talisman which brings the wearer luck and protects them from harm), worship of Li Grand Zombi (not to be confused with zombies, it's a snake god – the serpent represents the spiritual balance between genders and between sacred knowledge and worship). The origin of the name has been attributed to Marie Laveau's python – Zombi – but there are arguments it springs from the Bantu word 'Nzambi' – the serpent deity. Either way, boa constrictors became part of the theatre of Louisiana Voodoo.

Unlike in Benin and other parts of Africa where slave traders plundered the populous, once Vodun reached the Caribbean and America, women became involved in rituals. In Haiti, they are known as Hougans (men) and Mambos (women). In Louisiana Voodoo, this transformed into the kings and queens of Voodoo, who became not just priests and priestess of their religion, but people to whom congregations looked for spells and potions, as well as respected community leaders.

"Marie Laveau became a powerful and influential figure in New Orleans"

Doctor John (also known as Bayou John) was another famous 19th-century Voodooist said to have mentored Laveau. Both these historical figures were renowned in their time and lived during New Orleans Voodoo's heyday – between 1820-1860.

John was a tattooed former slave and sailor from Senegal, whose 'powers' involved resurrection and healing. It is said he could heal those on the verge of death. Born in 1937, Fred Staten moved from Haiti to New Orleans and styled himself Papa Midnite, crafting a stage routine which featured him biting the heads off live chickens during rituals, earning the sobriquet 'Chicken Man'. The commercialisation of Haitian Vodou and Louisiana Voodoo ended up a racket praying upon gullible folk and has become primarily a must-experience thing for tourists in New Orleans. Sales in mojos, gris gris and charm bags, known as ouanga, became a means of easy money at extortionate sums.

It's a long time since the controversial Marie Laveau commanded huge audiences in Congo Square or the shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain, said to be in their thousands. How many identify their religion as New Orleans/Louisiana Voodoo today is in the thousands at most, maybe two or three per cent of citizens, and mostly centred around the 7th ward. Away from the tourist traps and sensationalist movies, there remain those who take Voodoo seriously and respectfully. The founding of the Voodoo Spiritual Temple in 1990 served to carry on the traditions handed down, showcasing the great spirituality at the heart of Vodou and reclaimed it from decades of misinformation, propaganda and lies.

Voodoo is a polytheistic religion often confused with hoodoo, the folk magic many voodoo followers practise

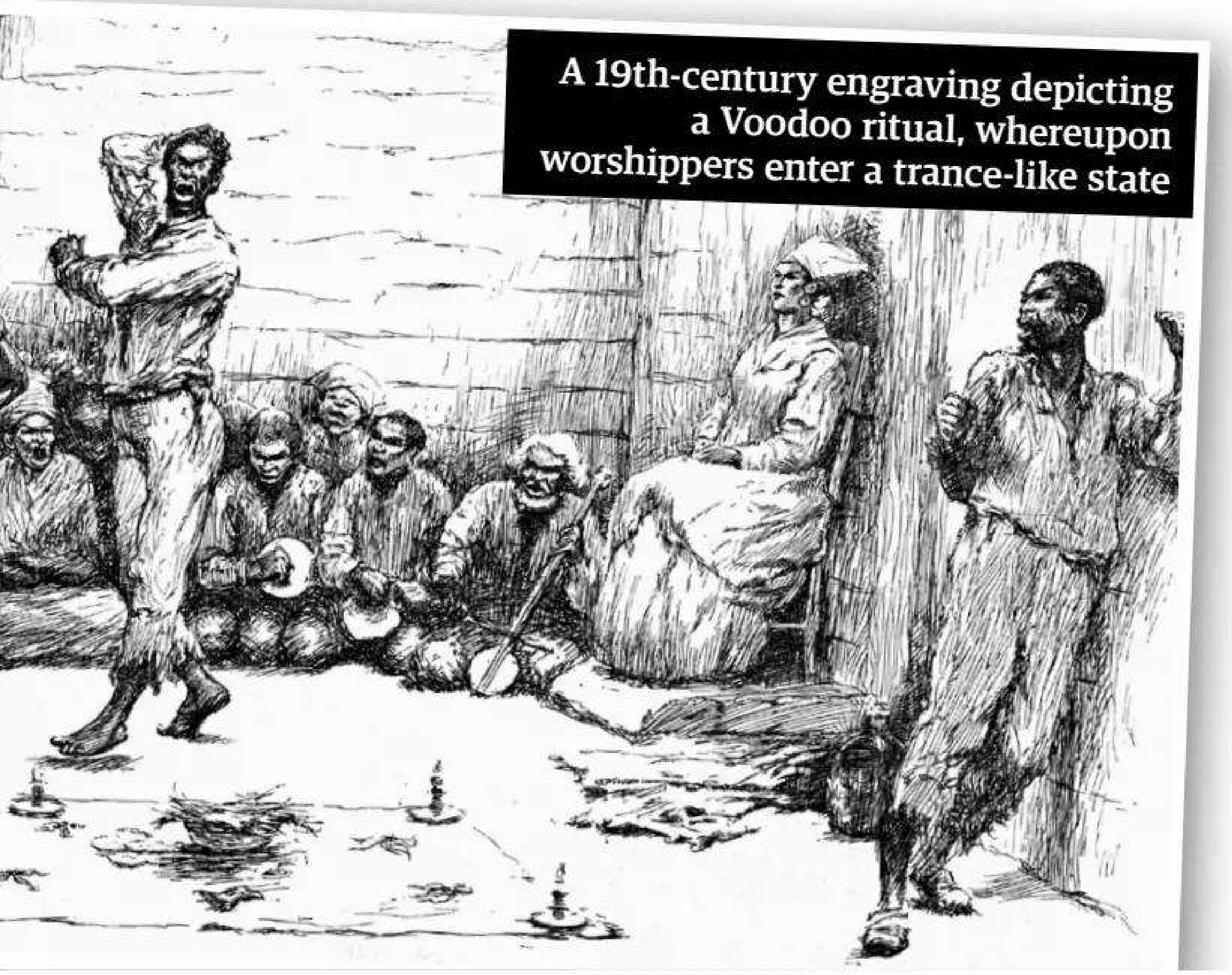
Voodoo's musical influence

The spiritual chants of Congo Square paved the way for popular music

References to Louisiana voodoo and hoodoo appeared early on in blues tunes by Robert Johnson, a guitarist and singer said to have sold his soul at a crossroads. Yet is might be surprising to discover voodoo has influenced not just jazz and the blues, but everything from rock 'n' roll to heavy metal. Audiences screamed with delight and some were outraged, when Elvis Presley swayed his hips with abandon, or the times Jerry Lee Lewis smashed the keys of piano like he was possessed. In a way, they were very much possessed, by the rhythm of the beat and the energy conjured by music, giving in to the primal urge to let go and lose oneself to dance. Music theorists and anthropologists have noted vodou's debt to 20th century pop, and the origin of the word 'rock' – as in rock music – itself is derived from the West African 'rak'.

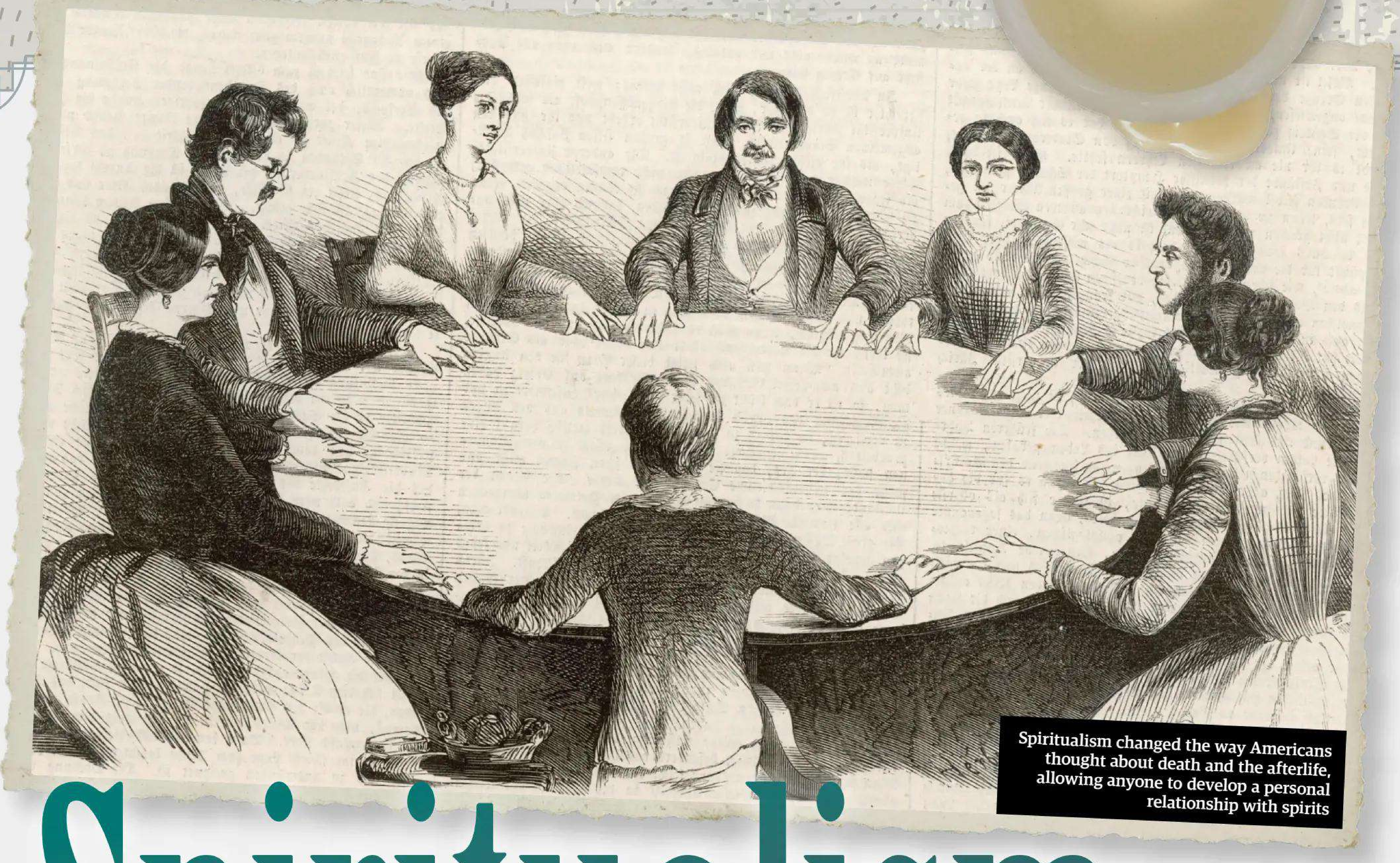
Blues musicians such as Muddy Waters were influenced southern church groups, and this fed into the era of white boys taking the blues and transforming it into rock, with famed guitarists Eric Clapton, Keith Richards and others constantly name-checking the Deep South as its inspiration. Screamin' Jay Hawkins went one step further, by incorporating voodoo imagery into his act, and wrote a hoodoo-themed classic, *I Put a Spell on You*. We've vodou to thank for rock stars going wild on stage and embracing the beat with a fervour with echoes of religiosity to it. The rock star is much like the voodoo king or queen leading the congregation.

© Alamy, Getty Images, Creative Commons; Mark Benecke



A 19th-century engraving depicting a Voodoo ritual, whereupon worshippers enter a trance-like state

Screamin' Jay Hawkins incorporated Voodoo imagery into his live act



Spiritualism changed the way Americans thought about death and the afterlife, allowing anyone to develop a personal relationship with spirits

Spiritualism

In the 19th century, a new religion with humble beginnings offered to reunite the living and the dead

Written by Kate Cherrell

Spiritualism's birthplace was no grand palace or vast community, but simply the modest farmhouse of the Fox family in Hydesville, New York. In 1848, the Fox household was disturbed by strange bangs and raps that kept them awake at night. Eventually, the youngest daughter, Kate Fox, challenged the unseen maker of the noise, believing it to be a spirit. Could it respond to the clicks of her fingers? Yes. Could it rap out the ages of the Fox sisters? Yes, with supernatural accuracy. Soon enough, a system of communication with the living and the dead was established, and the youngest Fox sisters, Kate and Maggie (aged approximately 11 and 14 respectively), were catapulted into the spotlight as the figureheads and mediums of a new religion.

While Spiritualism certainly had its harsh critics, the movement quickly spread across America and much of western Europe, as communities clamoured for the reassurance of life after death. Spiritualism bloomed throughout the Civil War landscape, when America was anticipating, then enduring, an enormous loss of life. As Americans sought spiritual stability and the bereaved searched for a new comfort, many found that established religion was unable to meet their needs. Spiritualism's popularity was a direct response to this new, terrifying reality, where séances were able to reunite the war dead with their families and bring tangible help to the grieving.

For many of Spiritualism's early years, there were no firm rules or belief systems, as the movement developed through travelling lecturers, magazines, societies and mediums, who all contributed to theories of the

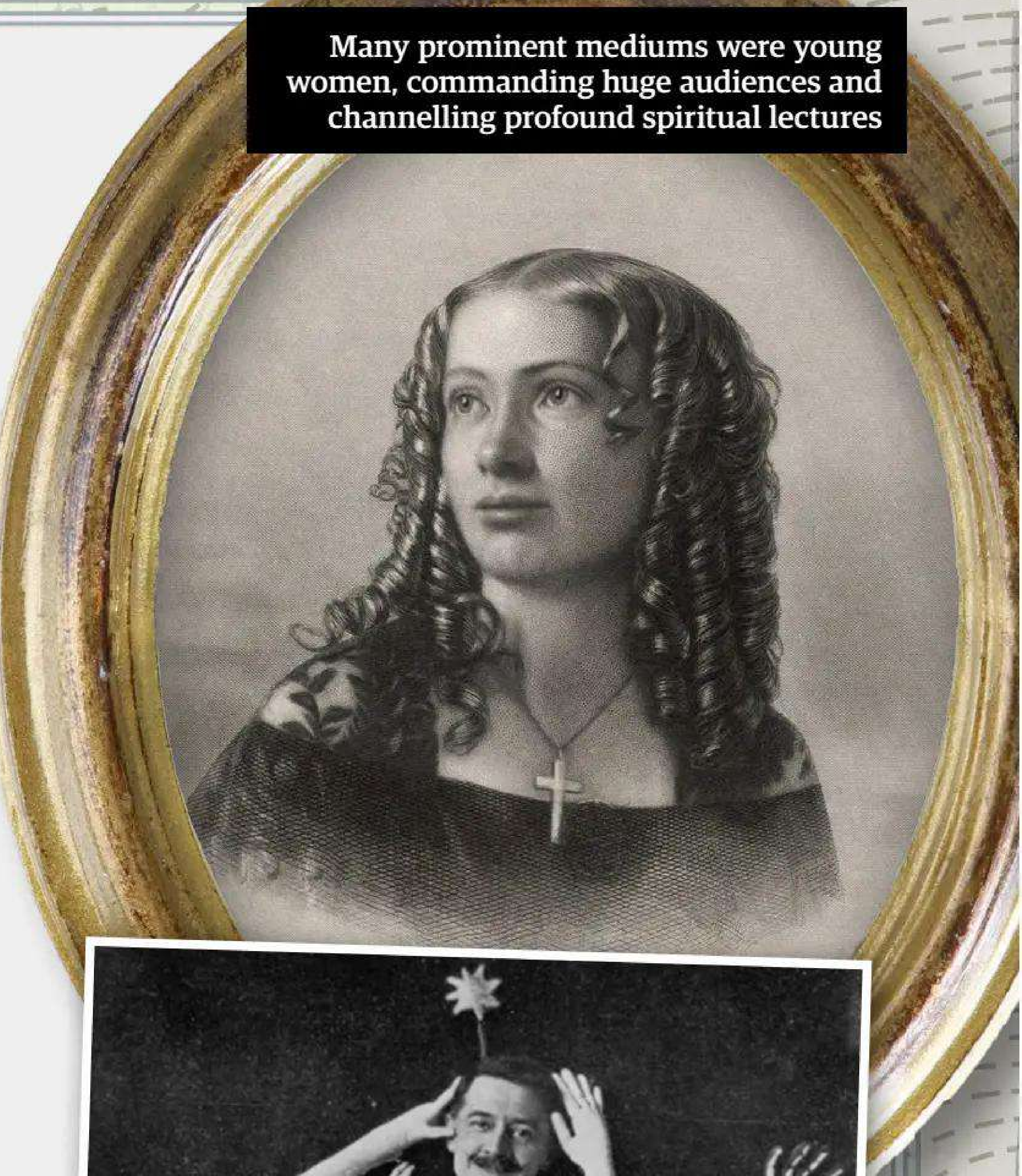
afterlife and the immortal soul. However, the central definable belief is that the human soul lives on after death and has the ability and inclination to return and communicate with the living. Spiritualists also believe that moral, ethical and intellectual development continues in the afterlife, and that returning spirits are more advanced and are able to deliver pertinent, godly advice. The Spiritualist movement in America first issued a 'Declaration of Principles' in 1899, with later additions in the following decades.

While many Spiritualist practises are seen as contemporary horror-movie tropes, their roots are rather more domestic in origin. Séances were conducted in grand halls, community rooms and around kitchen tables, where hymns and gentle requests welcomed the spirit world into that of the living. Mediums and ordinary people alike introduced Ouija boards and automatic writing (where a channelled spirit apparently influences one's pen) into their homes, while the rich and famous kept mediums on a stipend, and specialist photographers could capture an image of you and your deceased beloved… for a fee, of course. Spiritualism was as much about faith as it was about entertainment, and whispered messages in cosy séance rooms stood beside grand displays of mediumship, where hundreds would file into huge auditoriums for an evening of 'seeing the spooks'.

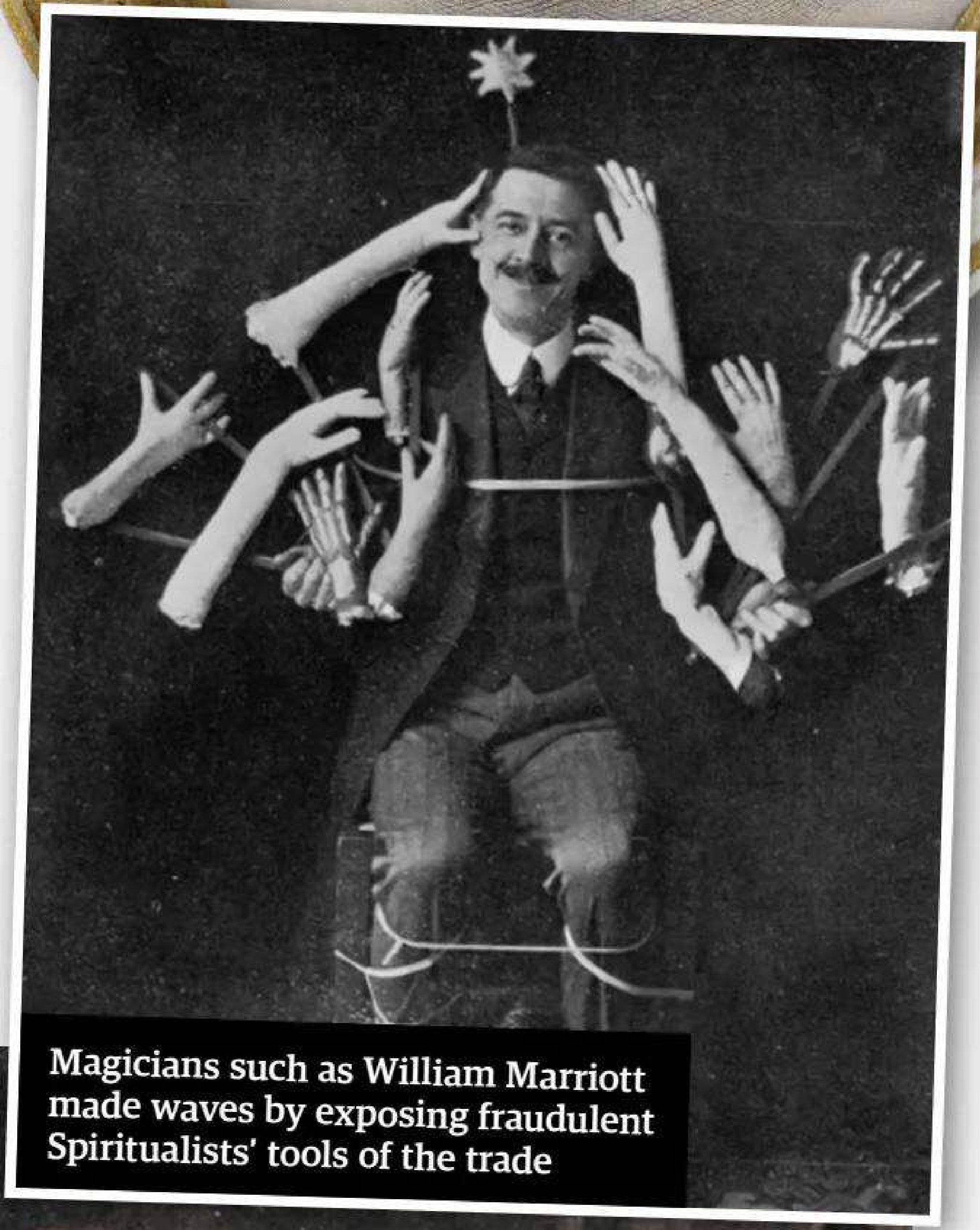
> In life, Harry Houdini debunked countless mediums. Following his death in 1926, his wife held annual séances, asking Houdini to reach out from the other side. He never did

Since its inception, Spiritualism has been associated with many left-wing and radical movements. The Fox sisters were promoted and nurtured by a local Quaker family, while later practitioners openly supported causes as diverse as vegetarianism, socialism, women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery. Unlike other established religions, women played a central role in the promotion and practice of Spiritualism, often featuring as prominent and financially successful mediums. While this undoubtedly led to a greater female appeal, it was also a common cause for criticism, as many news outlets and prominent figures expressed anger at seeing women hold positions of power.

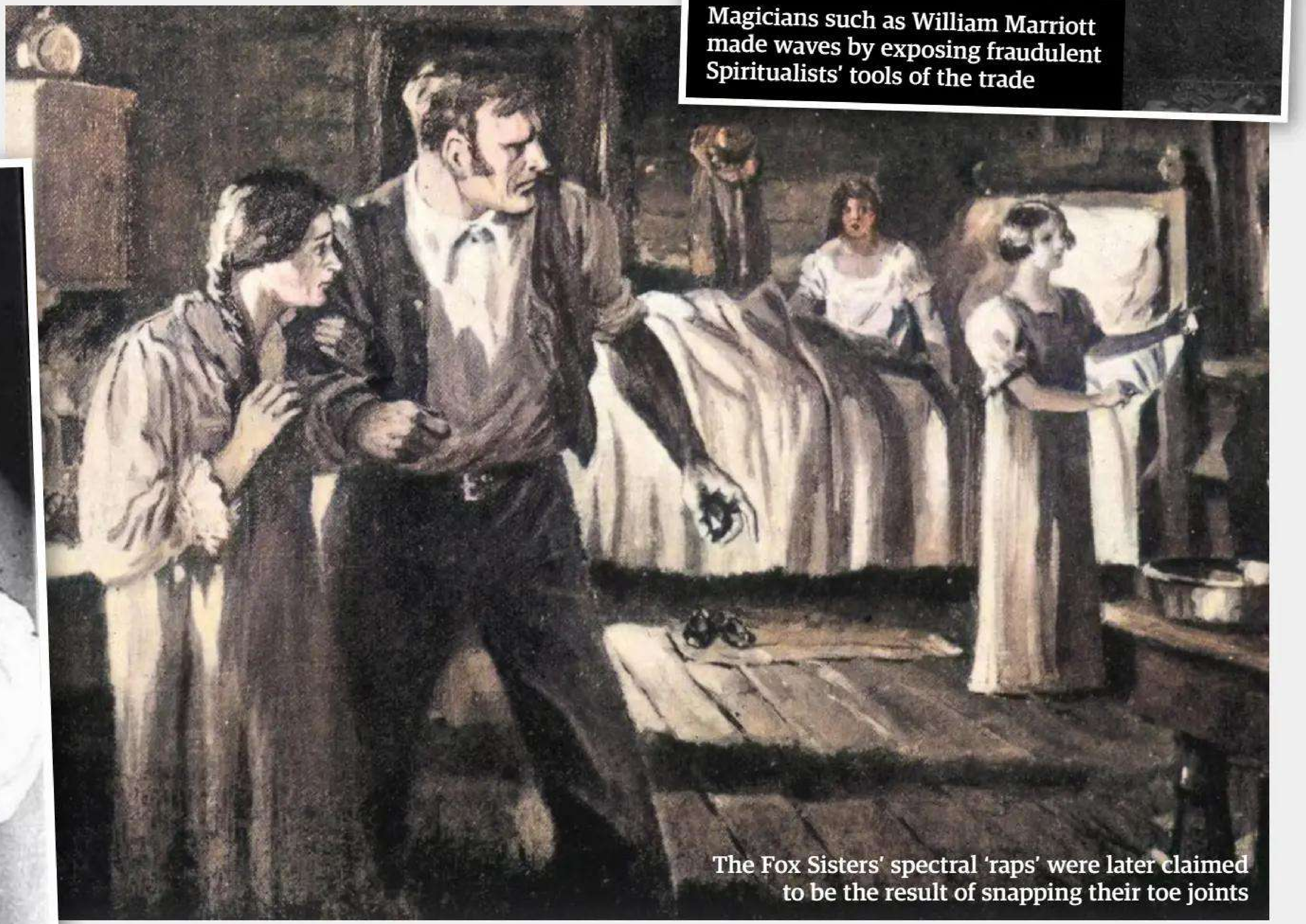
For all of its grand claims, Spiritualism was dogged with accusations of fraud, exploitation and deception, as dramatic 'exposures' made headlines worldwide. These scandals irreparably damaged Spiritualism's reputation and the movement began to significantly diminish at the turn of the century. However, belief in Spiritualism and séances enjoyed a significant resurgence in the 1920s and continues to this day, albeit as a far smaller fringe religion.



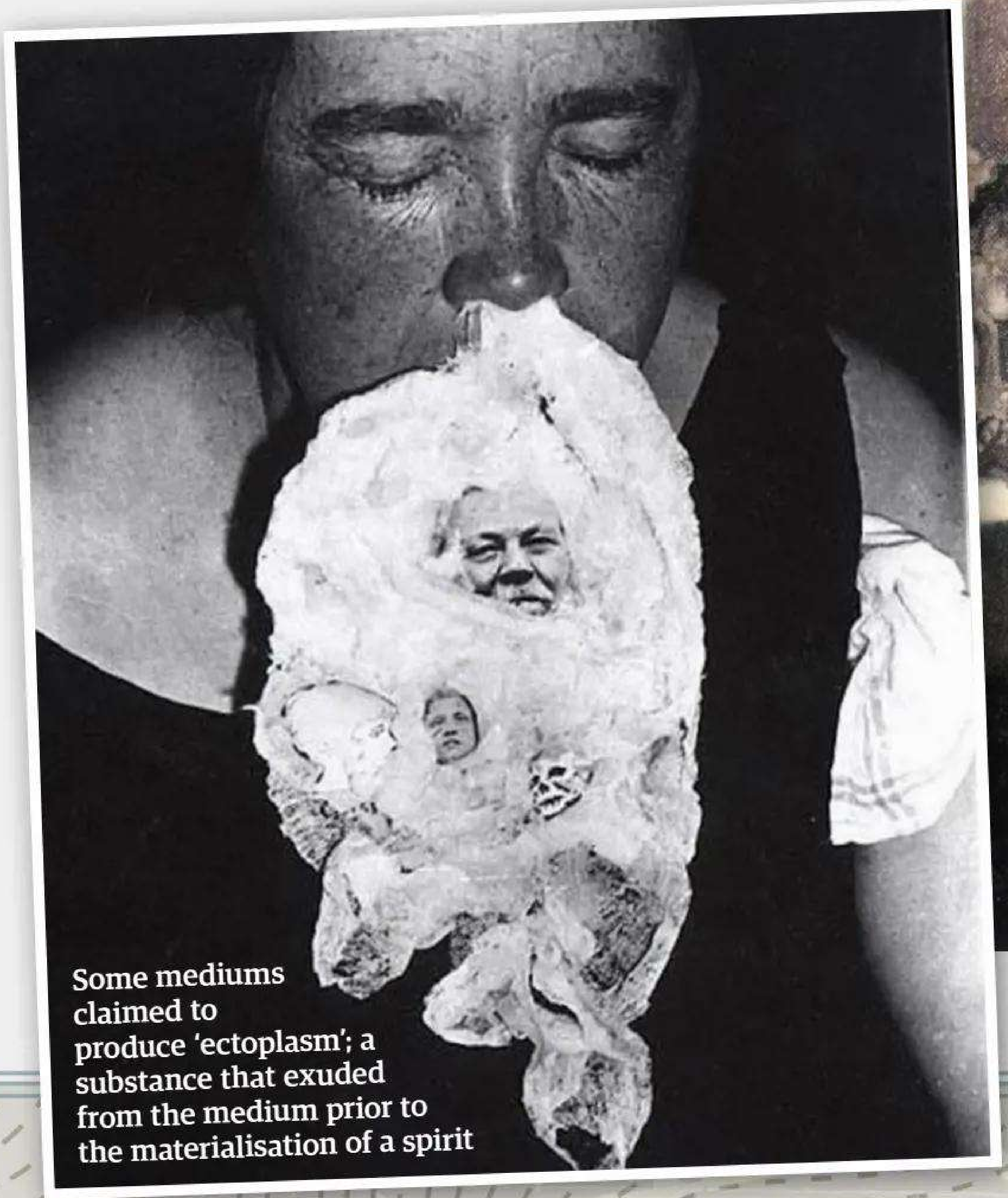
Many prominent mediums were young women, commanding huge audiences and channelling profound spiritual lectures



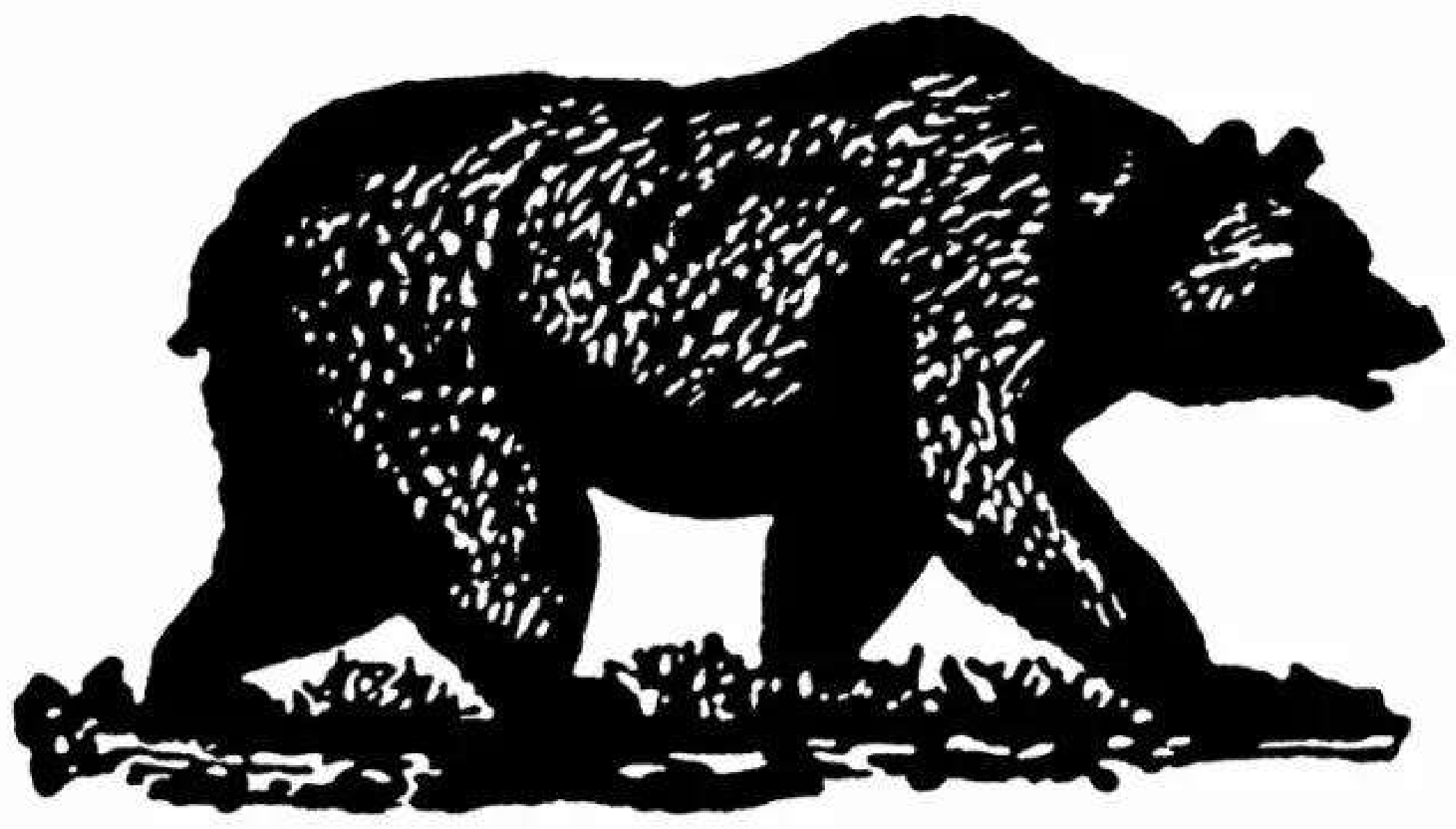
Magicians such as William Marriott made waves by exposing fraudulent Spiritualists' tools of the trade



The Fox Sisters' spectral 'raps' were later claimed to be the result of snapping their toe joints



Some mediums claimed to produce 'ectoplasm'; a substance that exuded from the medium prior to the materialisation of a spirit

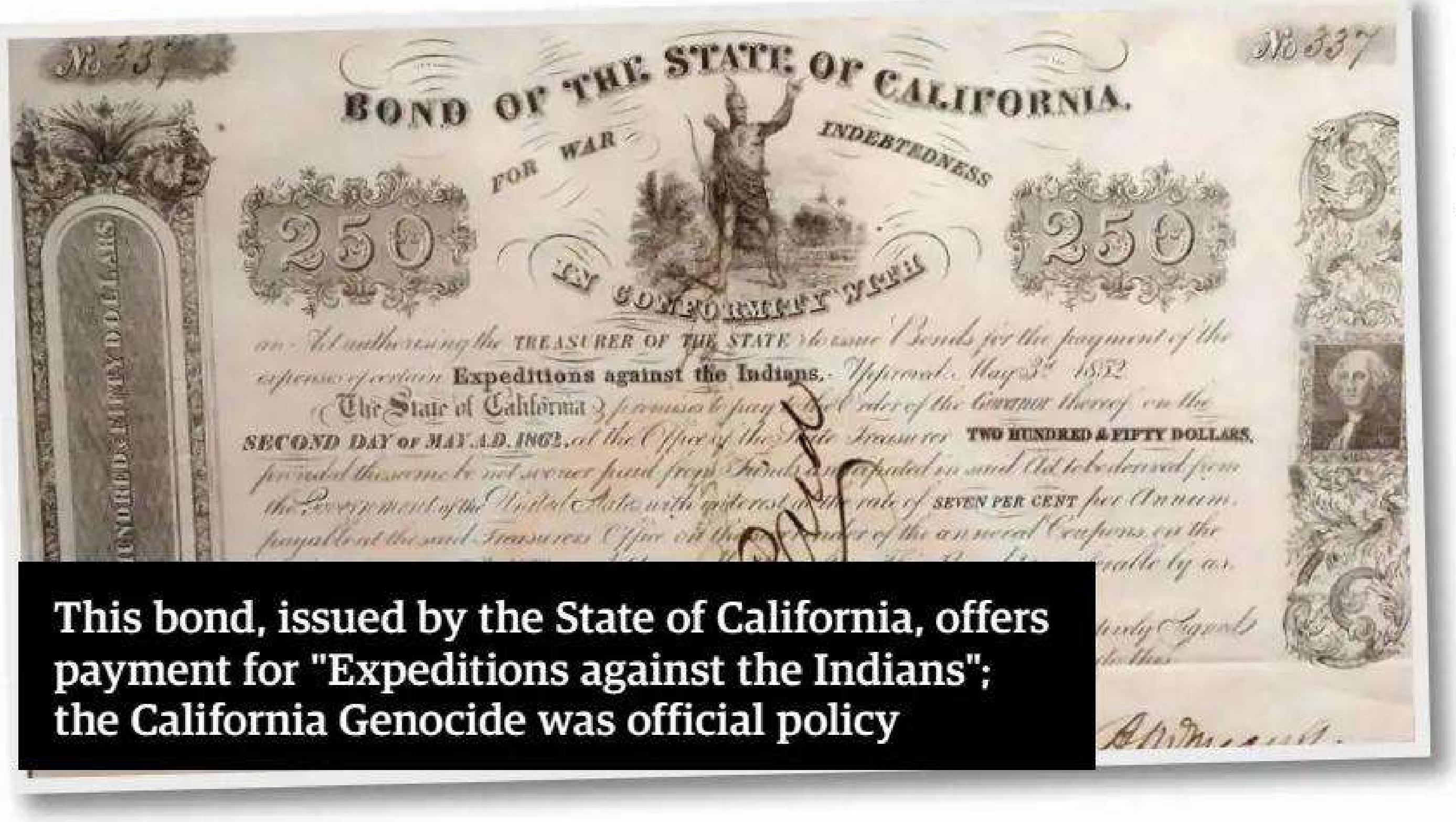


The California Genocide

Over more than 20 years, the California Genocide saw thousands of Indigenous people murdered, or abducted and sold into slavery

Written by Catherine Curzon

The period between 1846 and 1873 marks one of the most devastating chapters in the history of America's Indigenous people. In what is known today as the California Genocide, the Indigenous population of California plummeted from an estimated 150,000 people to around 30,000. Whilst many lost their lives to disease and starvation and others were displaced, state-sanctioned actions by violent state-funded militias, vigilante justice and even actions by the US Army cost thousands of Indigenous people their lives. Between 1849 and 1870 alone, at least 4,500 California Indigenous people were killed, with over 10,000 kidnapped and sold into slavery or indentured servitude.



No. 337

BOND OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

FOR WAR INDEBTEDNESS

250 250

IN CONFORMITY WITH

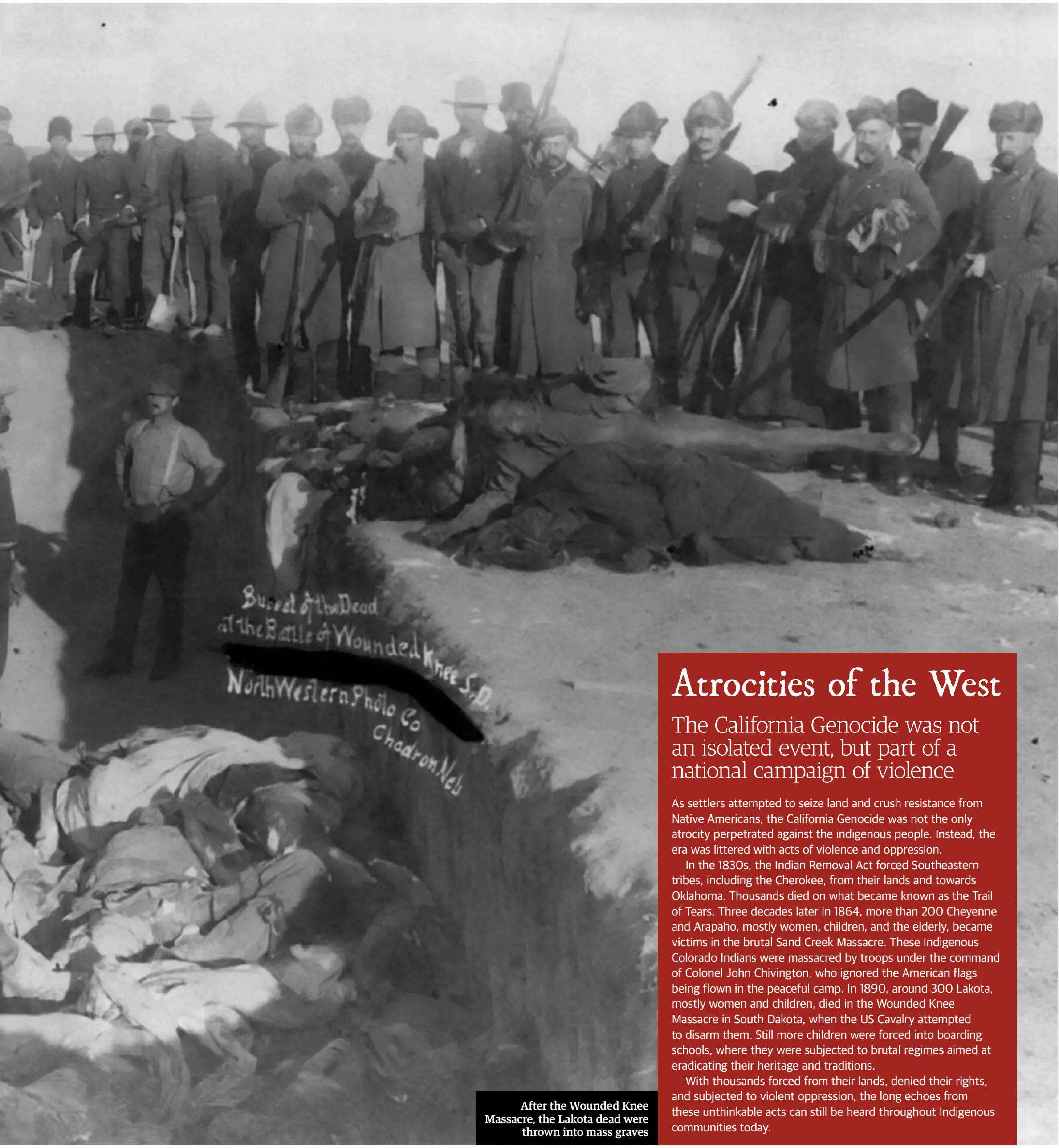
an Act authorising the TREASURER OF THE STATE to issue Bonds for the payment of the expenses of certain Expeditions against the Indians. Approved May 3rd 1852

The State of California promises to pay to the Order of the Governor thereof on the SECOND DAY OF MAY A.D. 1862, at the Office of the State Treasurer TWO HUNDRED & FIFTY DOLLARS, provided the same be not sooner paid from Funds appropriated in said Act to be derived from the Government of the United States with interest at the rate of SEVEN PER CENT per Annum, payable at the said Treasurer's Office on the surrender of the annual Coupons on the

This bond, issued by the State of California, offers payment for "Expeditions against the Indians"; the California Genocide was official policy

In 1850, the California Act for the Government and Protection of Indians was enacted in the California State Legislature and passed into law. Whilst the title of the act might sound benevolent, the reality was anything but. Known as the Indian Indenture Act, it legalised the indenture (forced servitude) of Indigenous people, effectively allowing settlers to use Native Americans as their slaves. The legislation denied Native Californians the right to vote, become citizens, or testify in a court of law. It laid the foundations for the displacement of the Indigenous Californians from their ancestral lands, separating children from their families and tearing families and communities apart. The law separated the Indigenous people from their language, culture, and people, and played a vital part in the California Genocide.

The Act was only fully repealed in 1937, though involuntary servitude was abolished in 1865. Within the first 15 years of the Act being signed into state law, kidnapping gangs had been free to act without fear of censure, and had abducted more than 10,000 people, many of them children, and sold them as slaves. During those years, the Native Californian population of Los Angeles plummeted from 3,693 to just 219 people.



After the Wounded Knee Massacre, the Lakota dead were thrown into mass graves

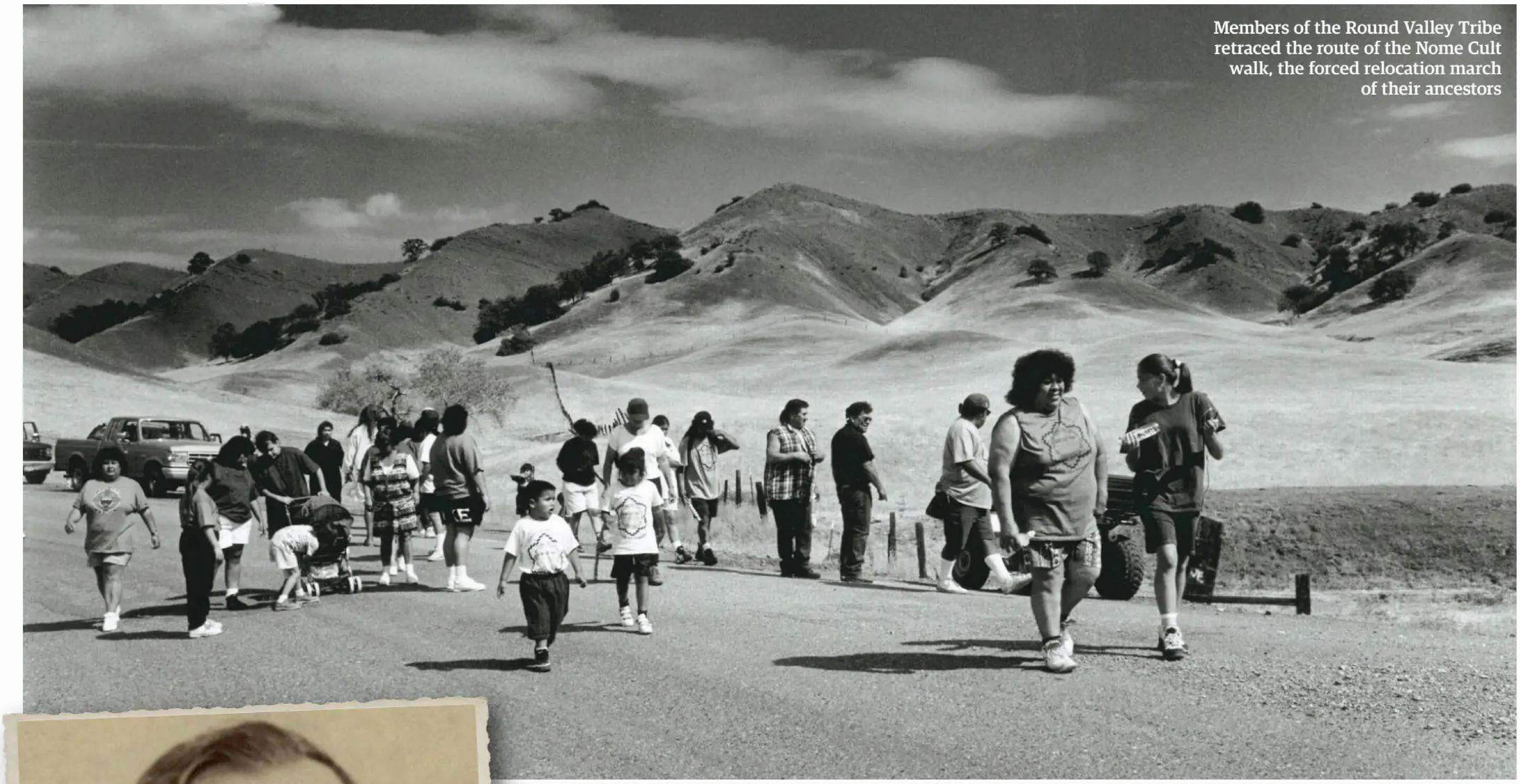
Atrocities of the West

The California Genocide was not an isolated event, but part of a national campaign of violence

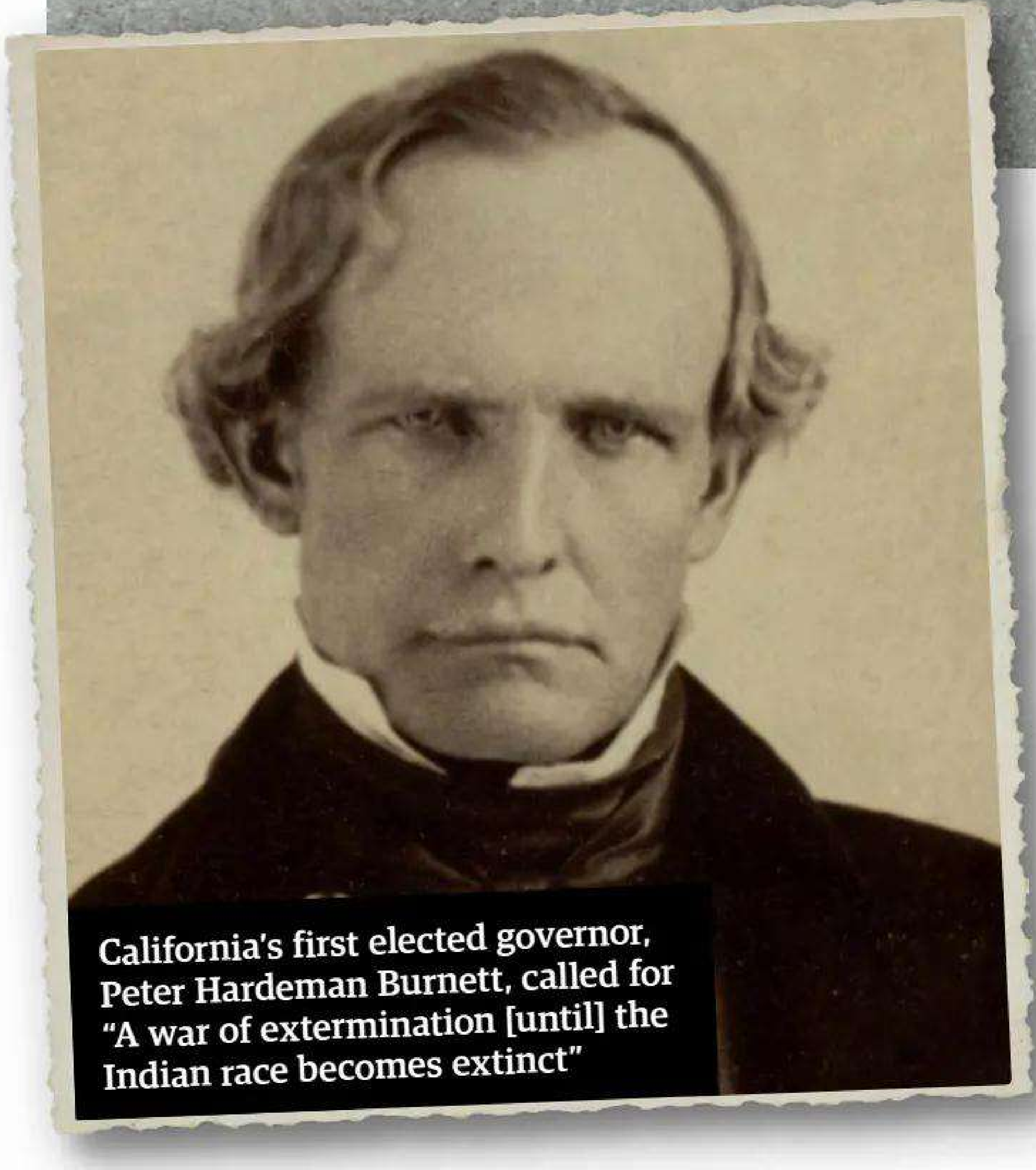
As settlers attempted to seize land and crush resistance from Native Americans, the California Genocide was not the only atrocity perpetrated against the indigenous people. Instead, the era was littered with acts of violence and oppression.

In the 1830s, the Indian Removal Act forced Southeastern tribes, including the Cherokee, from their lands and towards Oklahoma. Thousands died on what became known as the Trail of Tears. Three decades later in 1864, more than 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho, mostly women, children, and the elderly, became victims in the brutal Sand Creek Massacre. These Indigenous Colorado Indians were massacred by troops under the command of Colonel John Chivington, who ignored the American flags being flown in the peaceful camp. In 1890, around 300 Lakota, mostly women and children, died in the Wounded Knee Massacre in South Dakota, when the US Cavalry attempted to disarm them. Still more children were forced into boarding schools, where they were subjected to brutal regimes aimed at eradicating their heritage and traditions.

With thousands forced from their lands, denied their rights, and subjected to violent oppression, the long echoes from these unthinkable acts can still be heard throughout Indigenous communities today.



Members of the Round Valley Tribe retraced the route of the Nome Cult walk, the forced relocation march of their ancestors



California's first elected governor, Peter Hardeman Burnett, called for "A war of extermination [until] the Indian race becomes extinct"

"Militia groups received government funding, armaments and ammunition, and put them to use in devastating attacks on the population"

The wave of violence that shattered the Indigenous population was funded and explicitly encouraged by the newly founded State of California, spurred on by the discovery of gold in 1848 that led to a massive influx of settlers. After California became recognised as a state in 1850, the government passed multiple laws that stripped Native people of legal rights whilst handing militias arms in order to "protect" the interests of settlers. The inevitable result was genocide.

At the heart of the atrocity was an explicit state sanction that effectively condoned violence. In his State of the State address given on 6 January 1851, California's first elected governor, Peter Hardeman Burnett, declared, "That a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct must be expected. While we cannot anticipate this result but with painful regret, the inevitable destiny of the race is beyond the power or wisdom of man to avert." To put it simply, Indigenous genocide became a matter of official policy.

In the 1850s, more than one million dollars was doled out in funding for militias who were called upon to fight in so-called "Indian wars". The groups received government funding, armaments and ammunition and put them to use in devastating attacks on the Indigenous population. In return for their actions, leaders of the militias were able to bill the state for the services they had rendered, received monetary compensation as well as political or other office.

With settlers offered funding and arms, massacres came thick and fast. In 1850, the Bloody Island Massacre saw militia men and troops from the US Army slaughter dozens of Pomo people in revenge for the death of two slave owners, retaliation for the killing of two white settlers who had abused and murdered their people. As settlers forced Native Americans from their lands and claimed the gold as their own, tribes tried to fight back but found themselves violently put down.

The wave of violence gathered speed as the decade went on. Miners killed 300 Wintu people at Old Shasta and razed their council meeting house to the ground. In 1851 and in 1853, multiple massacres resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Native Californians. More than 20 massacres were recorded in the two decades that followed the Bloody Island Massacre, with the most devastating coming in the Round Valley Settler Massacres, which took place between 1856 and 1859. In this prolonged explosion of violence, white settlers murdered more than 1,000 Yuki Indians in Round Valley in Mendocino County in a sweeping serious of violent attacks. Women and children were kidnapped and sold into slavery and whole communities were destroyed by the settlers' violence.

For those who survived the massacres and attempted to rebuild their communities, the future was bleak. Livestock was driven off and crops destroyed or access to farmland blocked. Starvation and disease were rife, and the devastated survivors were sometimes driven by hunger to slaughter the cattle of white settlers for food. This, along with what little resistance the Native Americans were able to offer, only led to further attacks in retaliation. With such resistance and desperate raids on livestock by starving Native Americans presented as crimes against the newly arrived settlers, the massacres were celebrated in the press as necessary expeditions to preserve public safety and conquer the unforgiving landscape.

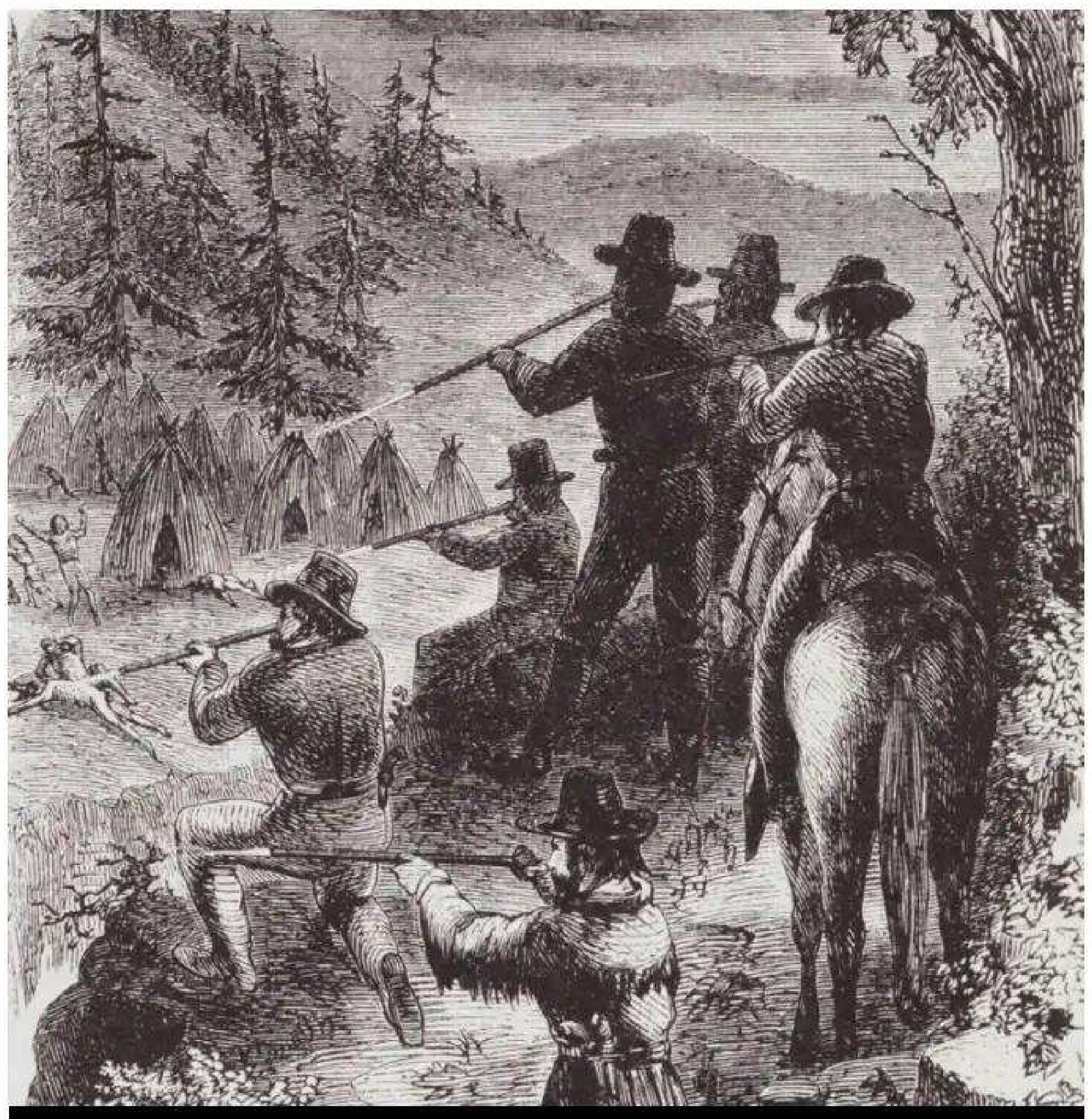
By the dawn of the 1860s, thousands of Native Californians had been killed or displaced. For those who remained, there was little hope for rebuilding and instead, survivors were promised treaties and reservations that failed to materialise. The Senate rejected all appeals for Indigenous Americans to be given protected reservations in their traditional territories and removed their rights to land.

Instead, the surviving Native Californians were forced into arduous marches to distant reservations, sometimes with military escorts. These marches were breeding grounds for disease and famine, further destroying the communities that had already been ravaged by violence.

By the mid-1870s, the massacres had come to an end for the simple reason that precious few Indigenous Americans remained in California. Those that were left had been forced into isolated regions, where they lived in dire poverty with scant rights. Organised violence as well as random killings perpetrated by individual settlers had resulted in the deaths of thousands of California Indians across hundreds of massacres, with thousands more forced into slave labour.

For decades, little was done to address the devastating impact of the California Genocide but in recent times, that has started to change. California Historical Landmark 427 was installed in 2005 as a memorial to the victims of the Bloody Island Massacre, whilst scholars have called for tribunals to examine the events of the genocide. To date, despite ongoing discussion, no such tribunal has taken place.

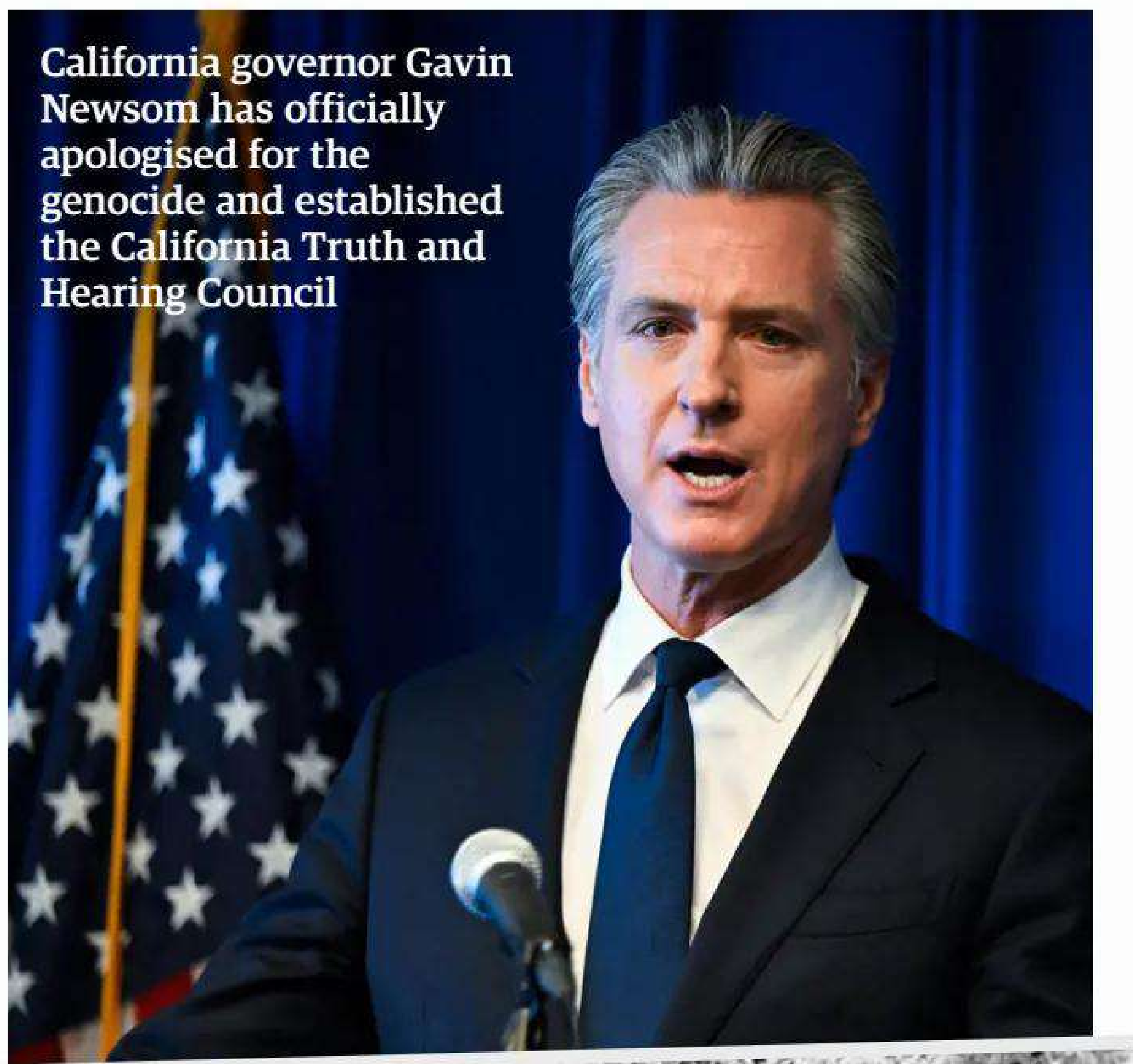
> Before the Genocide, California was one of the most linguistically diverse regions of America, with over 100 tribal nations speaking more than 300 variants of six different languages



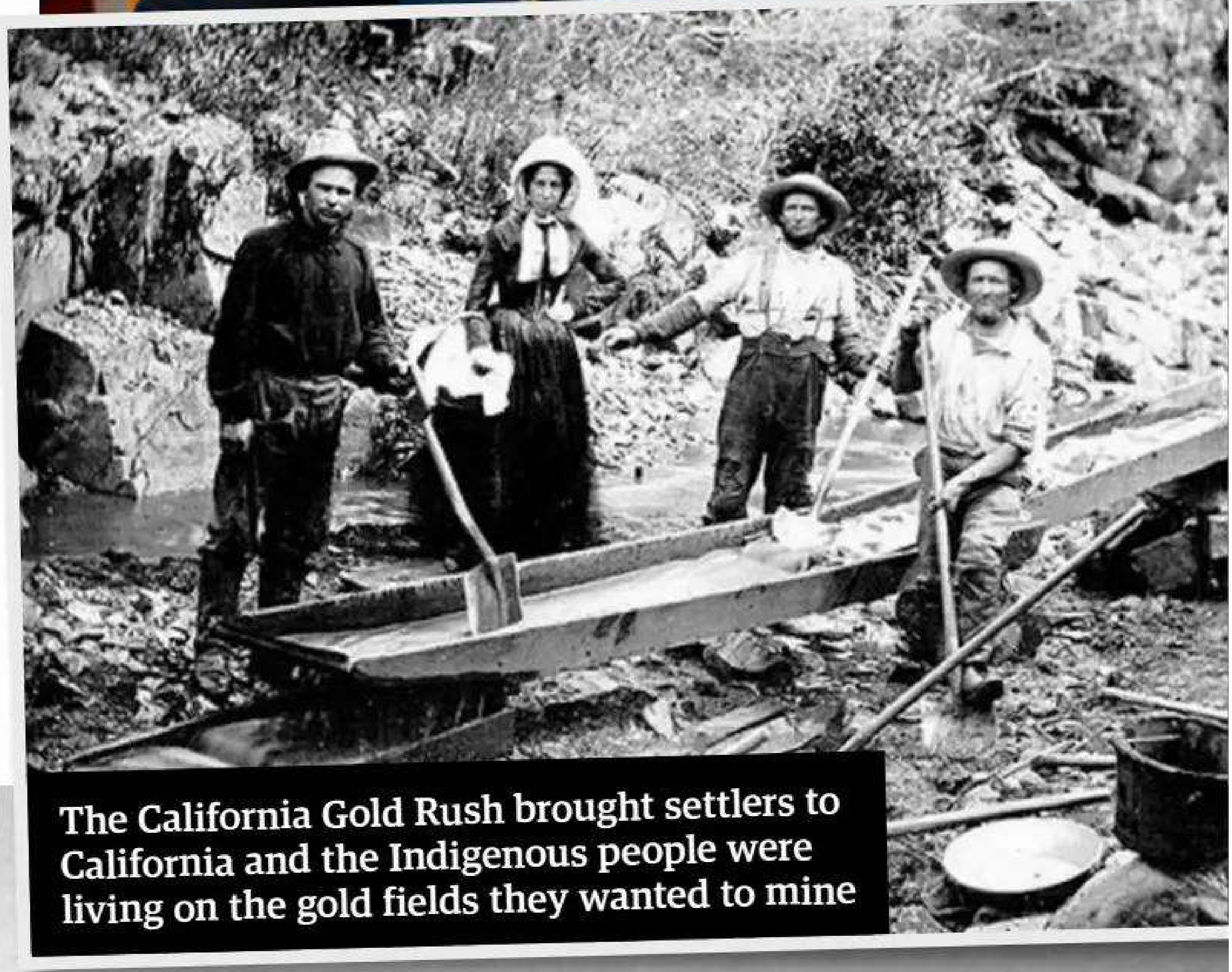
In the 1851 Mariposa War, members of the Mariposa Battalion opened fire on an Indigenous encampment

In 2019, California governor Gavin Newsom officially apologised for the genocide and established the California Truth and Hearing Council, to identify reparations and other measures to heal the wounds of the past. Five years later, Newsom confirmed that the state was committed to returning ancestral lands to the Indigenous communities who had lived on them for generations before the California Genocide.

Once, California's Indigenous peoples had consisted of tens of thousands of people spread across more than 100 tribes, each with its own traditions and culture, as well as multiple languages. The people who lost their lives, land, and freedom will never see justice, nor will the settlers and officials who wreaked such cruelty. The California Genocide brought devastation to these people and it remains a brutal demonstration of the weaponisation of official power, fuelled by greed and the hunger for land and gold; it is a lesson from history that must be learned.



California governor Gavin Newsom has officially apologised for the genocide and established the California Truth and Hearing Council



The California Gold Rush brought settlers to California and the Indigenous people were living on the gold fields they wanted to mine

Ishi was the last survivor of the Yahi people. With their land covering valuable goldfields, they fell victim to the genocide

©Alamy, Getty Images, Wiki Commons

Indigenous schools

The American Indian boarding schools and Canadian Indian residential school systems forced Native North American children into institutions in an attempt to erase their cultural identities

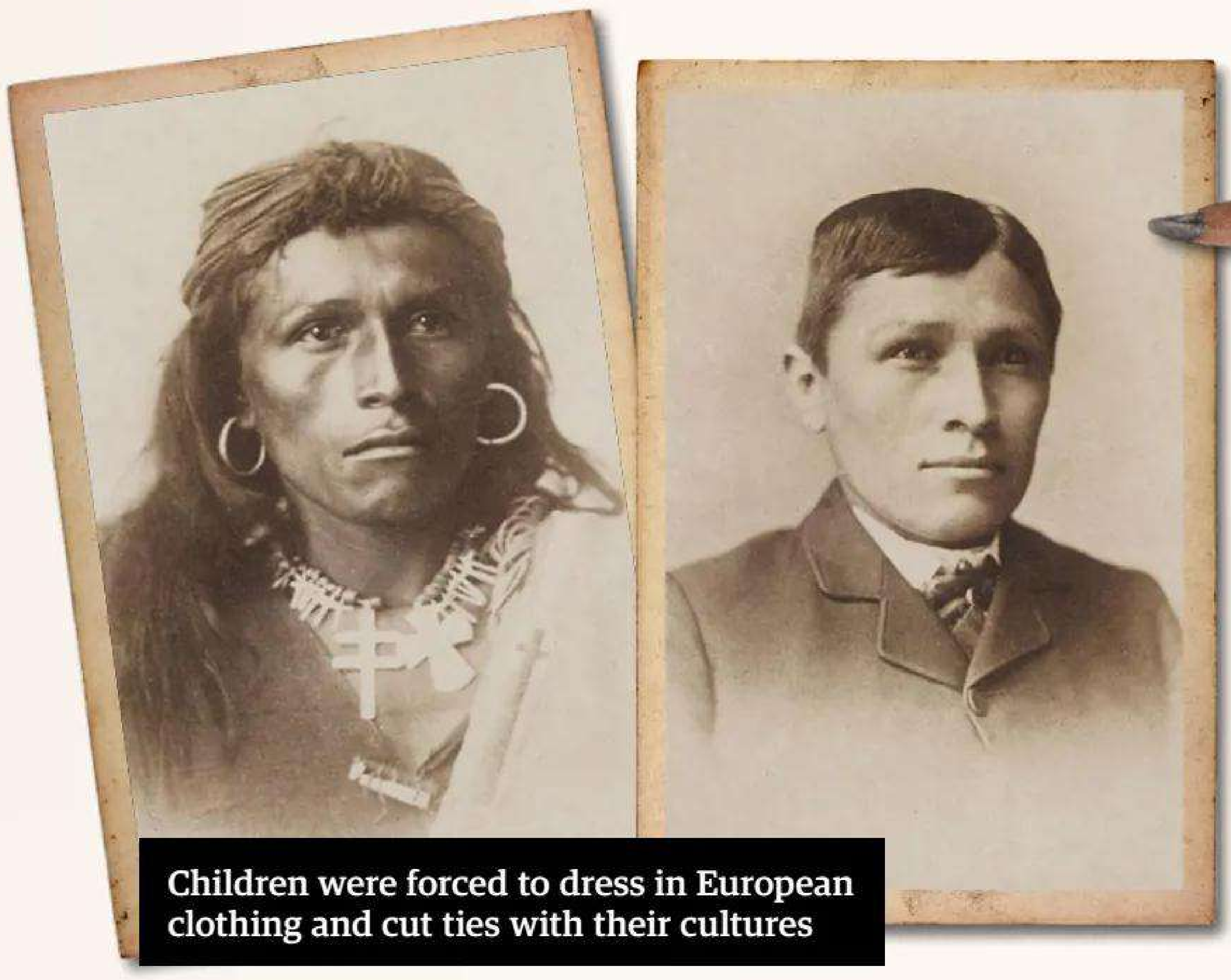
Written by Alice Pattillo

The atrocities the Native peoples of North America faced from European colonists began with them claiming the land for their own in the 16th century, but it didn't end there. The unspeakably harsh treatment and institutionalised racism continued up until the end of the 20th century in both the United States and Canada.

Between 1883 and 1997, more than 150,000 Indigenous children in Canada were taken from their homes and placed in boarding schools away from their families, where they were indoctrinated with Christianity and forced into manual labour. In the US, the story was much the same. There were 408 government supported boarding schools of the same nature, running between 1819 and 1969.

Beginning in the USA, indigenous schools were born out of the government's ploy to move Native tribes westward, forcing them out of land they wanted for themselves. Natives were forced along what became known as the Trail of Tears, many losing their lives en-route, and the survivors relocated to barren places. Any resistance was met with brute force and numerous tribes were massacred by armed troops brought in to enforce the policy. However, it was deemed too expensive for the government to continue with, and as more and more white settlers moved west, they worried they were running out of land to relocate Native tribes to.

Instead, they joined forces with the church and turned their attention to forced assimilation. The church had been running missionary schools for Native Americans since the 17th century, where the goal was "to extend civilization and instruction to his ignorant race, and show them the way to heaven," according to the colonial Jesuit missionary Andrew White. As part of many of the agreements made between tribes and colonists, the US government was required to educate the Natives on their reservations. But, following the end of the Indian Wars and American Civil War, racism against Native tribes increased and



Children were forced to dress in European clothing and cut ties with their cultures

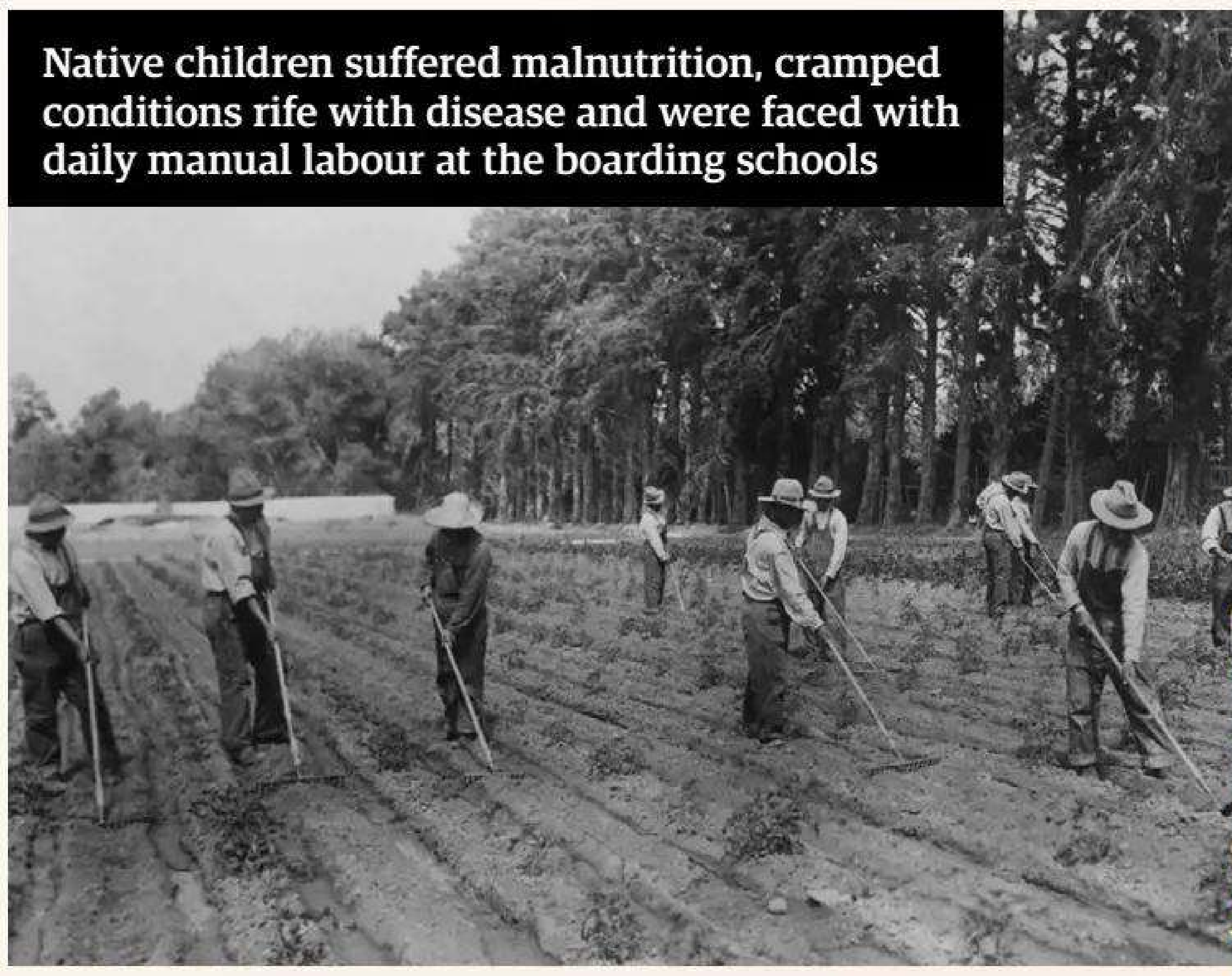
attempts were made to use the educational system to assimilate the tribal populations, therefore clearing the way to claim ownership of Native lands. While the goal was supposedly 'cultural assimilation', the reality was a government-enforced attempt at cultural genocide. The plan went like this: schools would isolate younger generations of the tribal nations in order to erase their culture, remove them from the reservations and force them into the general population. This would then leave the government free to claim their land.

In 1876, Canada passed the Indian Act, requiring all Natives to speak either English or French. By 1894, attendance to either a day school or residential boarding school was made compulsory for First Nations children. In the US, it was made compulsory for Indigenous children to attend one of these schools from 1877. Many Native people lived too far from a day school, so sending their children to a boarding school was the only way in which they could comply. What's more, these newer institutions were purposely located far away from the Indigenous communities in order to reduce the childrens' contact with their families.

One of the most influential of the residential schools was Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, opened in 1879. Its founder, General Richard Pratt, gave a speech in 1892 describing their philosophy of assimilation, infamously declaring "kill the Indian, and save the man" – highlighting the fact that white America saw Native tribes as barbarians who needed to be 'civilized'. Canadian Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, echoed a similar sentiment, and is quoted as saying: "When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with his parents who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write." Native parents had no option but to send their children to these institutions, otherwise they risked facing the punishments for those who refused – in 1895, 19 members of the Hopi tribe were sent to Alcatraz for protesting against their children being taken away from their care.

The conditions at the boarding houses were akin to contemporary orphanages – cramped and unhygienic. The institutions cut off their hair (long hair is a distinctive feature of Indigenous North Americans, tied to spiritual belief and traditions), renamed them, banned them from speaking their Native languages and forced them into slave labour for white families. Their culture was treated as a disease and bullied out of them. At the time the schools were running, stereotypes prevailed that Native people were good with their hands, so children were encouraged to go into manual trades rather than educated to university level. Programmes at the schools were designed to train them in vocational work that would benefit the white majority, while keeping them within the lower classes of society – it was a racist system of segregation that emphasised social class. On top of this, children were malnourished and subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Hundreds of Native children died while in the so-called care. Up until the 1950s, mortality rates in children were higher within Canadian Indigenous schools than anywhere else in the country.

In the 1950s, many of the residential schools closed down and the system was substituted with an adoption project where Native children were forced into the foster system to be adopted by white families. The new project offered no improvement on care standards, as many continued to be abused. By the 1970s, post-Civil Rights Movement, the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed and many of the remaining schools opted to change their policies and began to teach Indigenous traditions. However, in 2021, 1,300 unmarked graves were unearthed in Canada on the site of five former residential Indigenous schools, and it is estimated that between 3,000 and 30,000 children died in the schools across Canada, mostly from disease. In 2022 the US Interior Department reported that over 500 deaths at Indigenous boarding schools have been documented, with over 50 grave sites, but they expect to find many more.



Native children suffered malnutrition, cramped conditions rife with disease and were faced with daily manual labour at the boarding schools

Photo of Esau Prescott, from the Ho-Chunk Nation, in his boarding school uniform

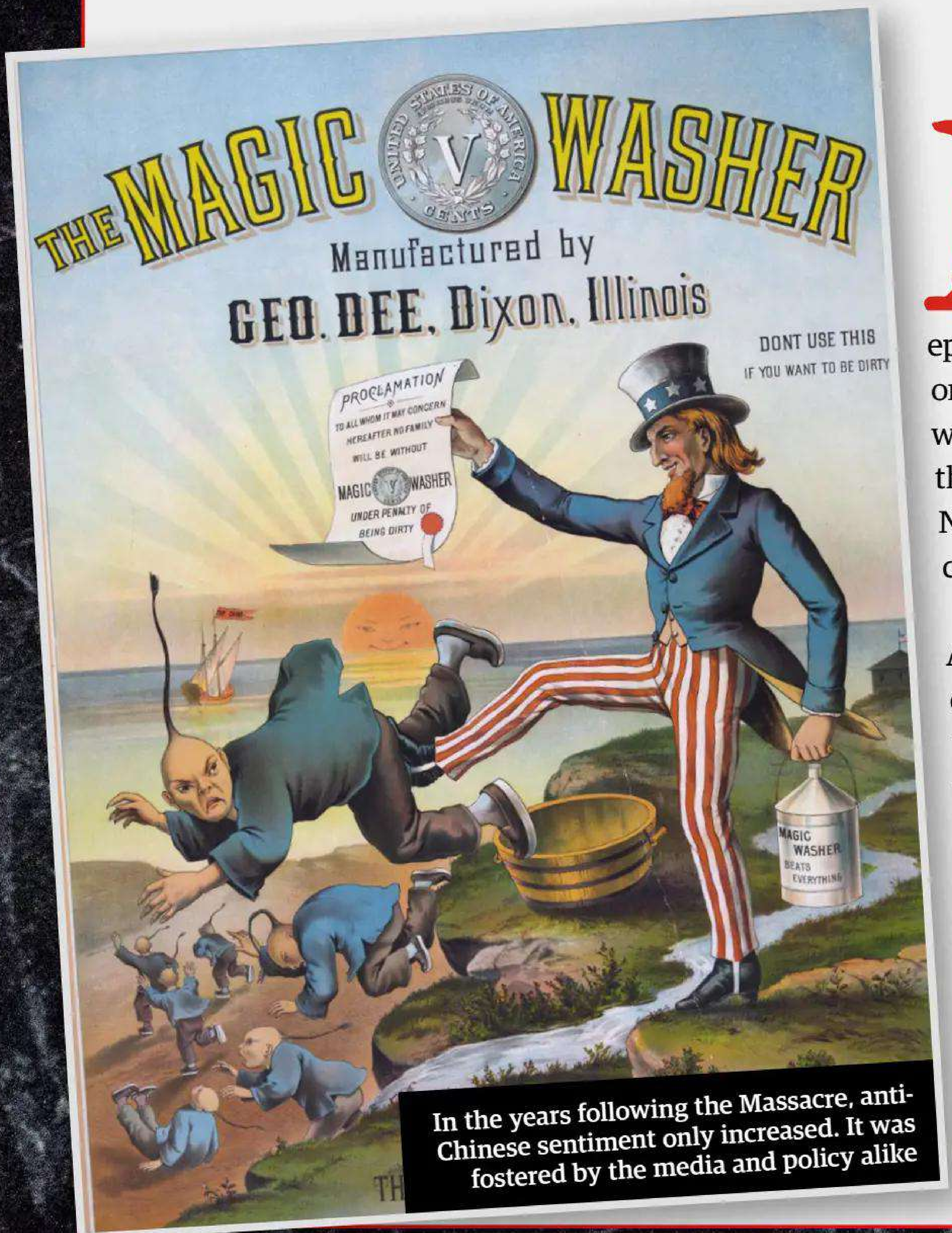
The schools aimed to erase the children's cultural heritage

© Getty; Alamy

The LA Chinatown Massacre

On 24 October 1871, a 500-strong mob murdered nearly 20 Chinese immigrants in LA's Chinatown. It remains one of America's most horrific racial atrocities

Written by Catherine Curzon


THE MAGIC WASHER
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
V
CENTS
Manufactured by
GEO. DEE, Dixon, Illinois
DONT USE THIS
IF YOU WANT TO BE DIRTY
PROCLAMATION
TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
HEREAFTER NO FAMILY
WILL BE WITHOUT
MAGIC WASHER
UNDER PENALTY OF
BEING DIRTY
MAGIC WASHER BEATS EVERYTHING

In the years following the Massacre, anti-Chinese sentiment only increased. It was fostered by the media and policy alike

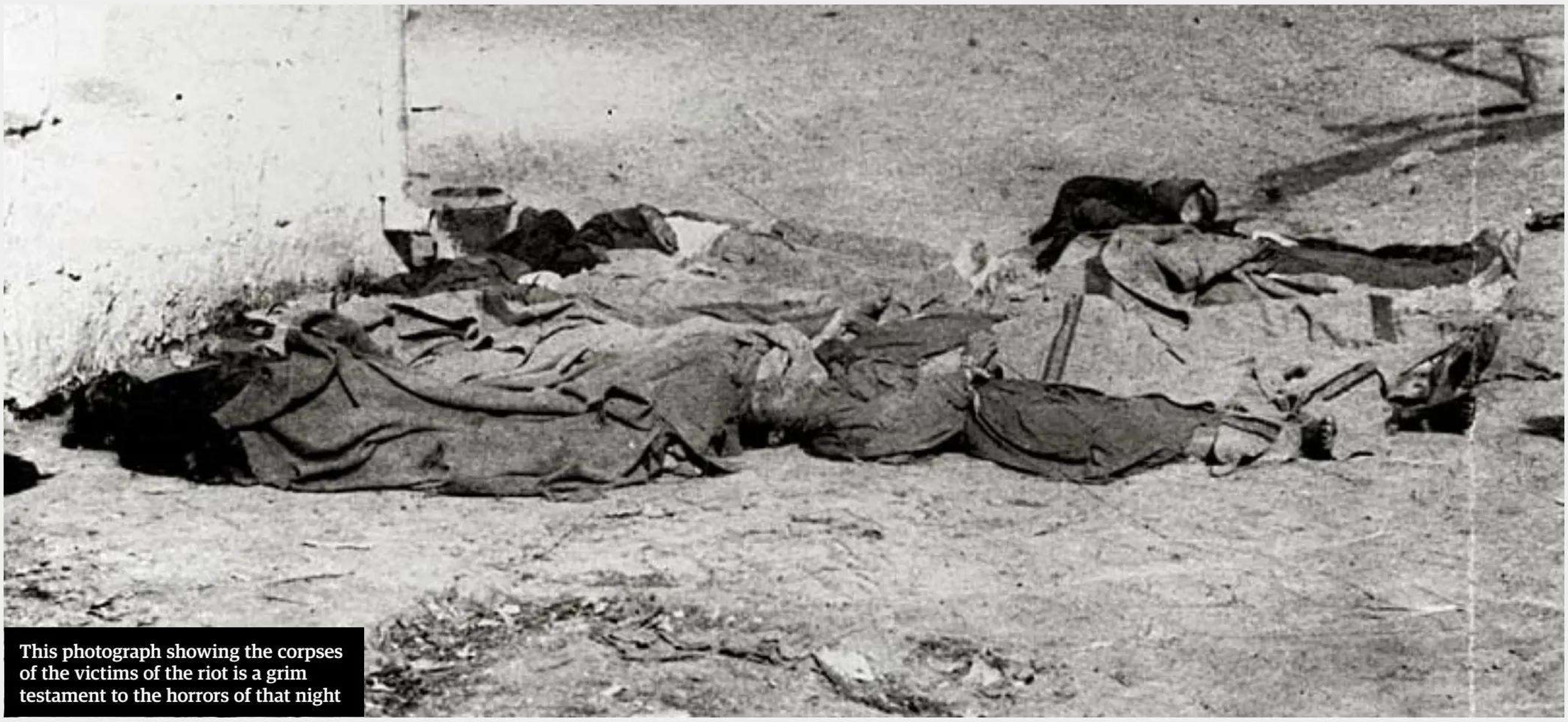
More than 150 years after it happened, the Los Angeles Chinatown Massacre of 1871 is still one of the most brutal episodes of anti-Asian violence perpetrated on US soil. On 24 October, a mob of 500 white and Latino men rampaged through the Chinese community in Calle de los Negros (Negro Alley), lynching those who crossed their path.

Chinese immigrants who arrived in America during the Gold Rush were demonised by newspapers and whites, who believed they were stealing jobs and taking money out of the US economy. An 1854 California Supreme Court ruling had denied Chinese people from testifying against whites in court, robbing them of a vital legal right.

The Chinatown Massacre was kicked off by a feud between two rival Chinese Tong factions, the Nin Yung and Hong Chow, who had been involved in a series of clashes over the alleged abduction of Yut Ho. Yut Ho's brother, Won Choy, attempted to kill Yo Hing, whom he suspected of carrying out the kidnapping, but instead Won Choy was fatally shot. When Officer Jesus Bilderain was shot dead, a white rancher named Robert Thompson came to his aid. He too was shot, dying later that night.

As news of the deaths spread across Los Angeles, rumours swirled that the Chinese were executing whites at random. A mob assembled around the Coronel Adobe, where some of the Chinese gunmen had barricaded themselves, determined to dish out punishment. At nine o'clock that night, the mob shot the locks off the doors and smashed their way into the building. They dragged the occupants into the street towards a makeshift gallows that had been constructed on the porch of a wagon shop, ignoring the pleas of some of the crowd to hand the men over to the authorities. One of those who attempted to stop the slayings was Robert M Widney, who later presided over the subsequent trials.

The pleas for mercy went unheard and the men were hanged. By the time the sheriff



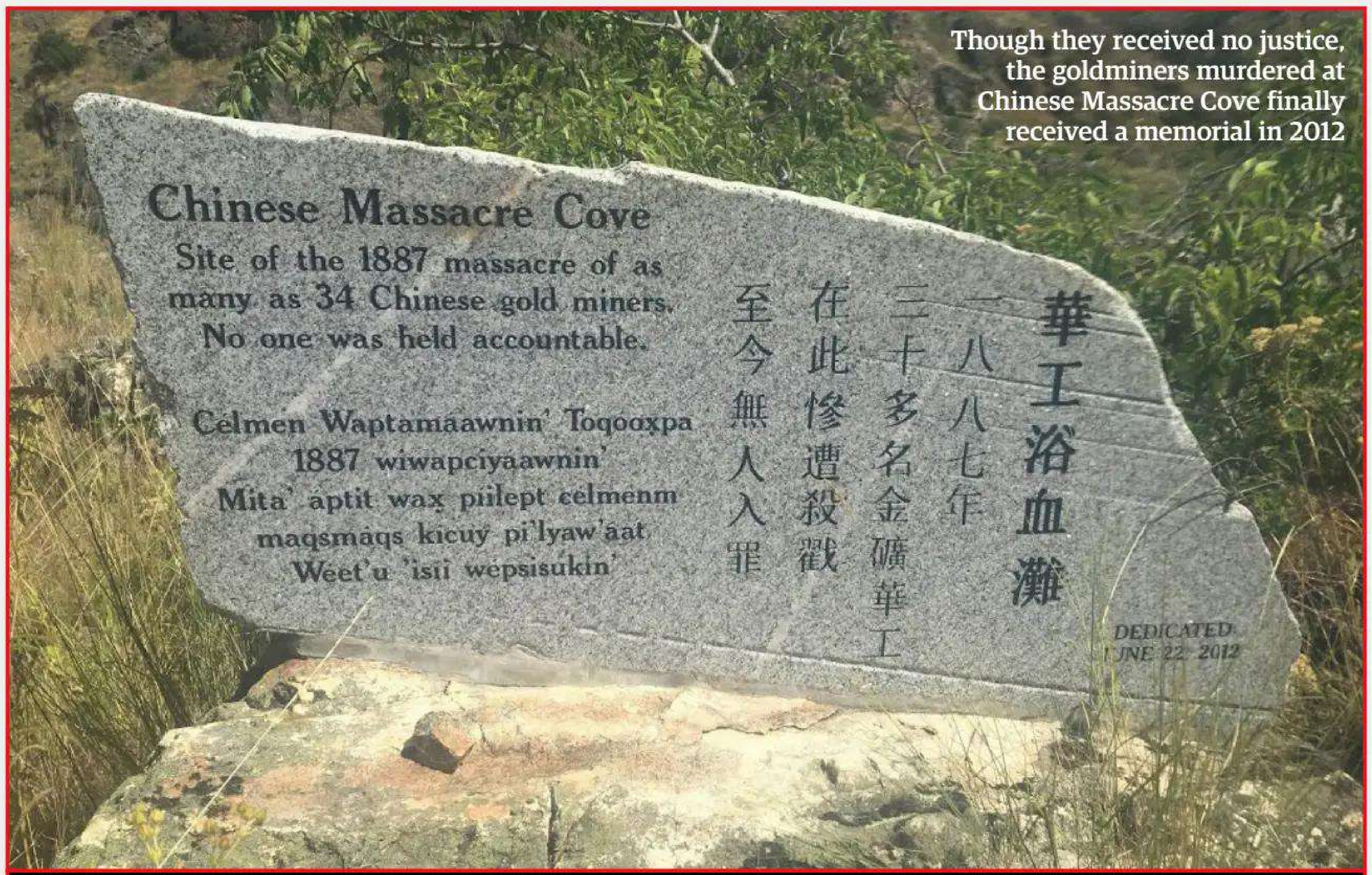
This photograph showing the corpses of the victims of the riot is a grim testament to the horrors of that night

arrived and called for 25 armed volunteers to keep the peace half an hour later, it was too late. Not content with their kangaroo court and executions, the rioters rampaged indiscriminately through the area for three hours, looting homes and businesses and lynching innocent men. Only a couple of their victims had any connection to the shootings and among the Chinese dead were teenagers, shopkeepers, and a respected doctor. One of the victims had been mutilated, his finger severed in order to steal his diamond ring.

The mob consisted of roughly eight per cent of the inhabitants of Los Angeles; between them, they murdered ten per cent of the city's tiny Chinese population in one night.

Following the coroner's inquest, a grand jury called for 25 men to be indicted on 49 charges of felony and murder. In the event, only ten men were put on trial. Eight of the defendants were convicted of manslaughter and received sentences ranging from two to six years in San Quentin. However, the convictions were overturned on appeal by the California Supreme Court on a technicality, as the indictments didn't attribute any individual death to any individual killer. With Chinese witnesses denied the right to bear witness and white witnesses unwilling to come forward, District Attorney Cameron E Thom decided against a retrial. The men were free to go.

For the victims of the mob in Calle de los Negros that night in 1871, there was to be no justice. The incident was forgotten and the persecution of the Chinese immigrants continued; no lessons had been learned.


Chinese Massacre Cove
Site of the 1887 massacre of as many as 34 Chinese gold miners. No one was held accountable.
Celmen Waptamaawnin' Toqooxpa 1887 wiwapciyaawnin' Mita' aptit wax piilept celmenm maqsmaqs kicuy pi'lyaw'aat Weet'u 'isii wepsisukin'
華工浴血灘
一八八七年
三十多名金礦華工
在此慘遭殺戮
至今無人入罪
DEDICATED JUNE 22, 2012

Though they received no justice, the goldminers murdered at Chinese Massacre Cove finally received a memorial in 2012

Chinese Americans Under Attack

The Chinatown Massacre was not the last attack on Chinese immigrants into America in the 19th century

In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act became law, prohibiting the immigration of Chinese labourers and stoking resentment in white workers who had lost jobs to lower paid immigrants. Three years later on 2 September 1885 in Rock Springs, Wyoming, white workers killed at least 28 Chinese miners, injuring others and burning down their homes. No arrests were made. Just five days later in Squak Valley, Washington Territory, whites and Native Americans fired on the tents of Chinese hop-pickers, killing three and wounding three. This time the attackers were put on trial, but all were acquitted.

One of the most brutal attacks took place in May 1887 when 34 Chinese gold miners were attacked by horse thieves in Hells Canyon, Oregon. Their mutilated corpses were thrown into Snake River and their gold was stolen. Despite six men being indicted, none were convicted. In 2012 a memorial to the dead was erected on the banks of the river, honouring the victims at last.

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America's Worst Race Crime

On the night of 31 May, 1921, a prosperous Black community in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was attacked by an armed white mob. The ensuing massacre claimed over 300 lives and is among the most horrific events in US history

Written by Jonathan Gordon

It came to be known as 'Black Wall Street' - a 35-block district called Greenwood neatly segmented from the neighbouring areas of Tulsa by a rail line - and it was a beacon of African American entrepreneurship and culture. In the era of Jim Crow laws and segregation, Greenwood had thrived. It had its own schools, hospital, stores (that served Black customers, unlike the ones across the tracks), two newspapers and two movie theatres. Of the 10,000 or so African Americans who lived in Tulsa (out of a population of around 100,000), about 80 per cent of them lived in Greenwood.

But by early morning on 1 June 1921 Greenwood had been razed to the ground. Over 1,400 homes had been destroyed, businesses had been looted and as many as 300 people had been killed. Thousands of white invaders had stormed the district, armed with machine guns and even using a plane to firebomb the town. While at the time it was referred to as a riot, the word massacre seems far more appropriate and is more commonly used today. It was a horrific crime, yet not one person was convicted. How did it happen? And why?

First, we need to understand a little more about Greenwood, the wider experience of African Americans in this era and why Black Wall Street was so important. "The community began in about 1906," Hannibal B Johnson, attorney and author of Black Wall Street 100, explains. "Established by wealthy Black businessman OW Gurley, a migrant from Arkansas, the area blossomed into the most enterprising and successful Black business community in the nation in the early 20th century, a period marked by legal segregation of the races in virtually all aspects of life." But while it was successful, it was not immune to those forces. "The Greenwood district was unique only in terms of the development and sophistication of its business community. Black Tulsans felt the sting of racial oppression in a segregated society like their brothers and sisters in many other parts of the country. The size and strength of the Black Wall Street economic engine provided some buffer and solace against the systemic racism of the day."

Known as Black Wall Street, Greenwood was a beacon of African American entrepreneurship and culture in the Jim Crow era

Tulsa and Oklahoma more broadly had drawn masses of newly liberated enslaved people to its lands in the years since the end of the Civil War. "Even though Oklahoma was a slave territory, after the Civil War ended it was opened up in two different chunks to freed slaves and white settlers, and it was very, very cheap," explains Bethany Rains, who is currently living in Oklahoma and researching the Tulsa Massacre for her thesis.

A photographer surveying the destruction of 1 June 1921

© Getty Images

"Their goal was to have reliable income, to have land, to have everything, so that their freedom couldn't be taken away." There was, however, a ceiling to success for Black communities in segregated states. While money could be focused on their own community since it couldn't be spent elsewhere, new technology and training was being kept out of reach.

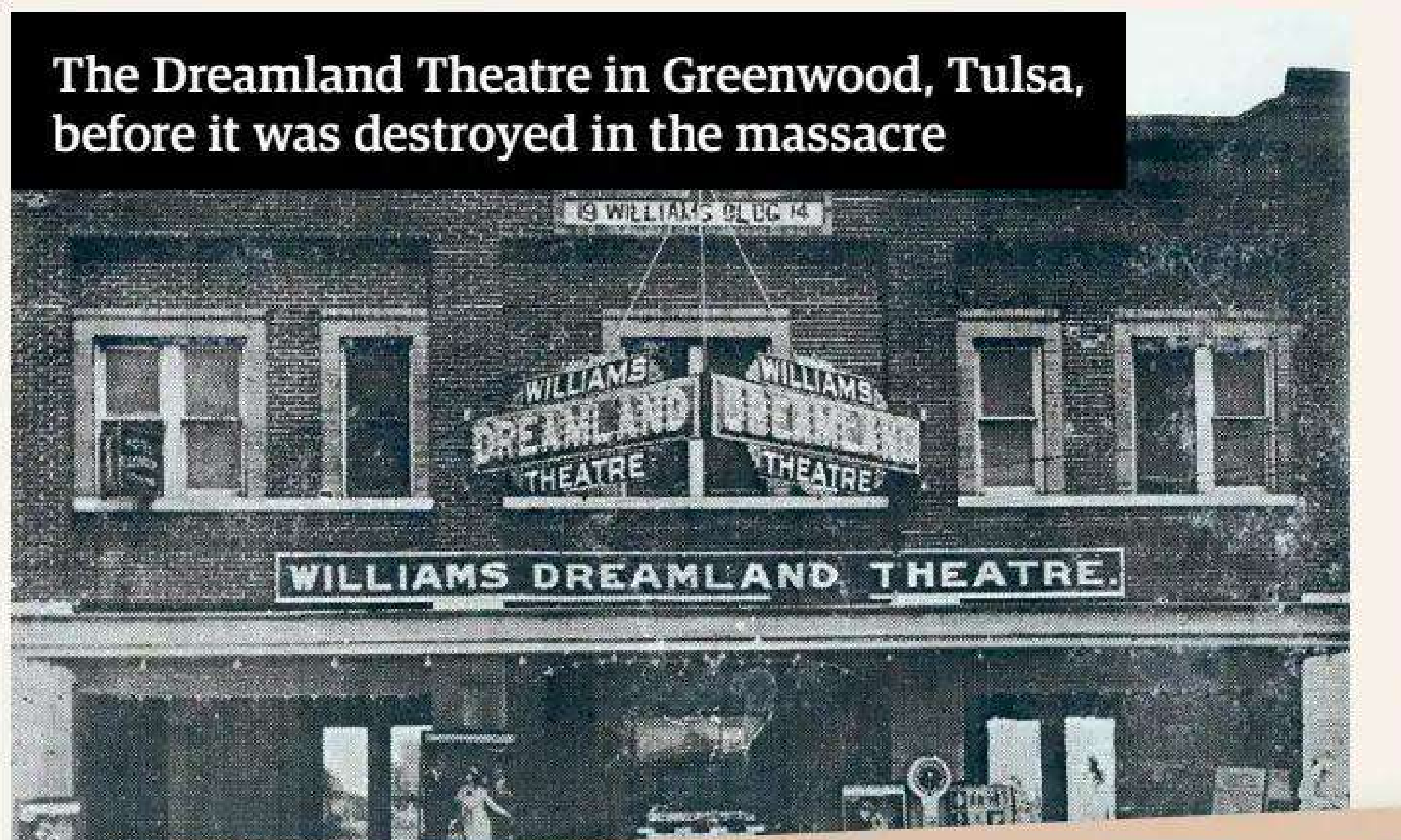
Acute racial tensions remained in many regions of America. Sixty-one lynchings and 25 race riots were recorded in America in 1919, 61 lynchings in 1920, and 57 in 1921. A bill had been proposed in 1918 to make lynching a federal crime, and while it passed the House of Representatives it died in the Senate after three failed attempts to get enough support. Meanwhile, white supremacist group the Ku Klux Klan had returned in a new form in 1915, starting in Georgia. By 1921 it had around 2,500 members in Oklahoma, with doctors, lawyers, judges, sheriffs, ministers, bankers, city employees and more among its members.

In Tulsa vigilantism had also been on the rise as various corruption scandals and political issues had seen the police force weakened. One group calling itself the Knights of Liberty attacked unionists such as the Industrial Workers of the World (or Wobblies), with one incident involving members being whipped, tarred and feathered. Only a few months before the massacre of 31 May, a white 18-year-old named Roy Belton was lynched in Tulsa after he was accused of killing a taxi driver named Homer Nida. While the mob hanged him, the police were said to have directed traffic around the spectacle.

All of this was the backdrop to the events that unfolded in Tulsa in 1921, and tensions were further increased by local animosities towards the growing influence of the Greenwood community and jealousy over its success. "Tulsa was a tinderbox - a powder keg - in 1921," says Johnson. "It took only a single spark - an igniter, a catalyst - to set the town alight. That trigger was an elevator incident in downtown Tulsa on 30 May 1921 involving two teenagers - a Black boy and a white girl. In this America, Black male/white female relationships were presumptively suspect, and in many places taboo. The boy apparently bumped into the girl. She overreacted, the police were called, and the *Tulsa Tribune* reported the incident the next day as an attempted rape."

The exact details of what happened became fuzzier and more exaggerated as the day passed, but testimonies and police records paint a clearer picture. Dick Rowland, a teenage shoe shine, had entered the Drexler building to use the restroom (in the segregated Tulsa, his employer had negotiated permission for Black employees to use it). Rowland entered the elevator operated by white teenager Sarah Page, and when the elevator lurched Rowland fell into her. It seems he stepped on her foot, at which point Page slapped him. He grabbed her arm to stop her from doing so again, and she screamed. A clerk working at the nearby Renberg's store ran to her aid and Rowland fled, fearing the potentially catastrophic repercussions for a Black man having dared to grab the arm of a white woman.

Not only did the *Tulsa Tribune* claim Rowland had assaulted Page in its afternoon edition the next day, it also included an editorial titled 'To Lynch Negro Tonight', suggesting Rowland would be attacked in retaliation. A few hundred copies of this edition were already distributed before some of the paper's editors convinced publisher


The Dreamland Theatre in Greenwood, Tulsa, before it was destroyed in the massacre
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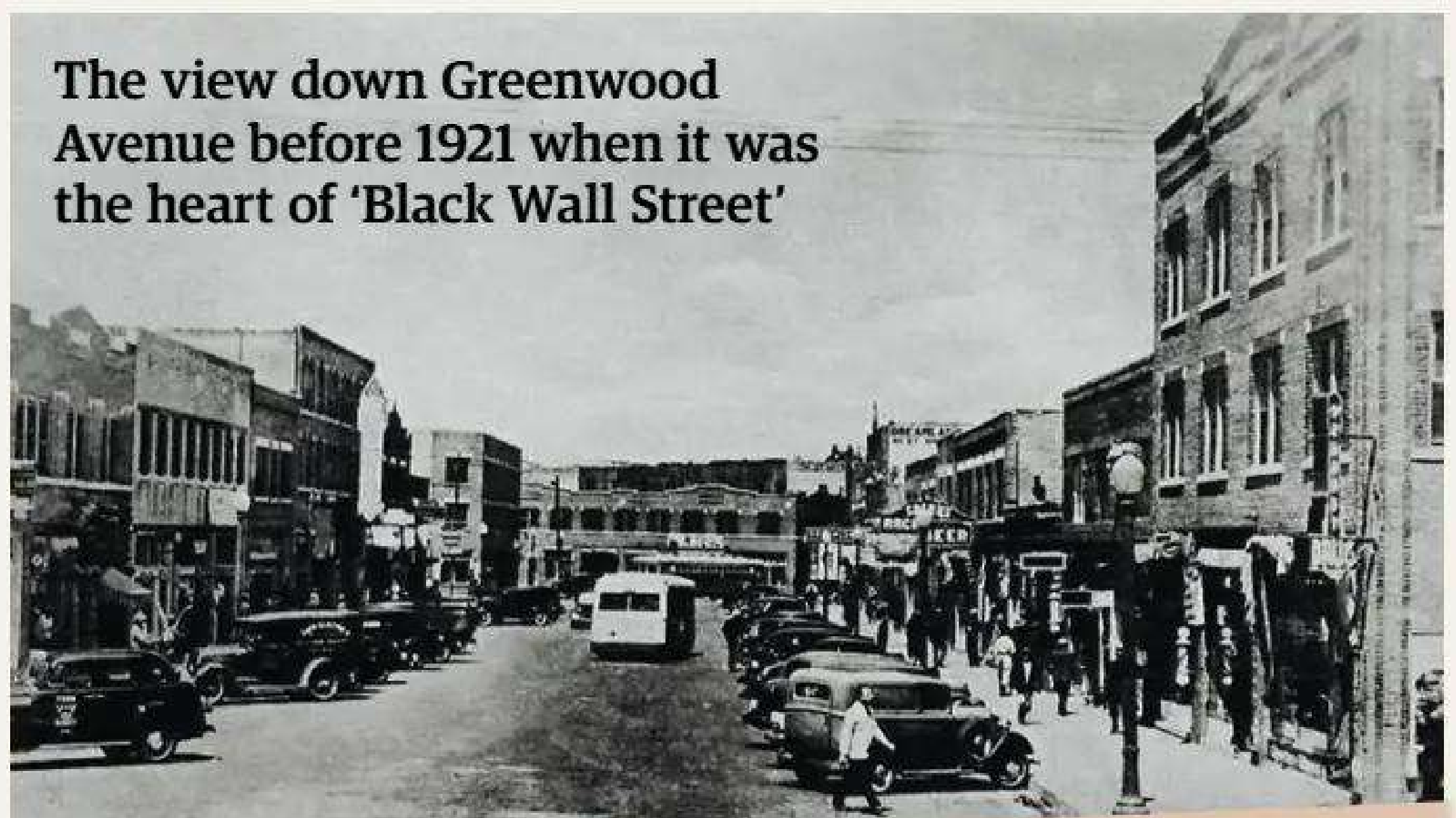

The view down Greenwood Avenue before 1921 when it was the heart of 'Black Wall Street'

Businessmen like John Wesley Williams, unable to spend money elsewhere because of segregation, reinvested in the Greenwood community, helping it thrive

Timeline of events

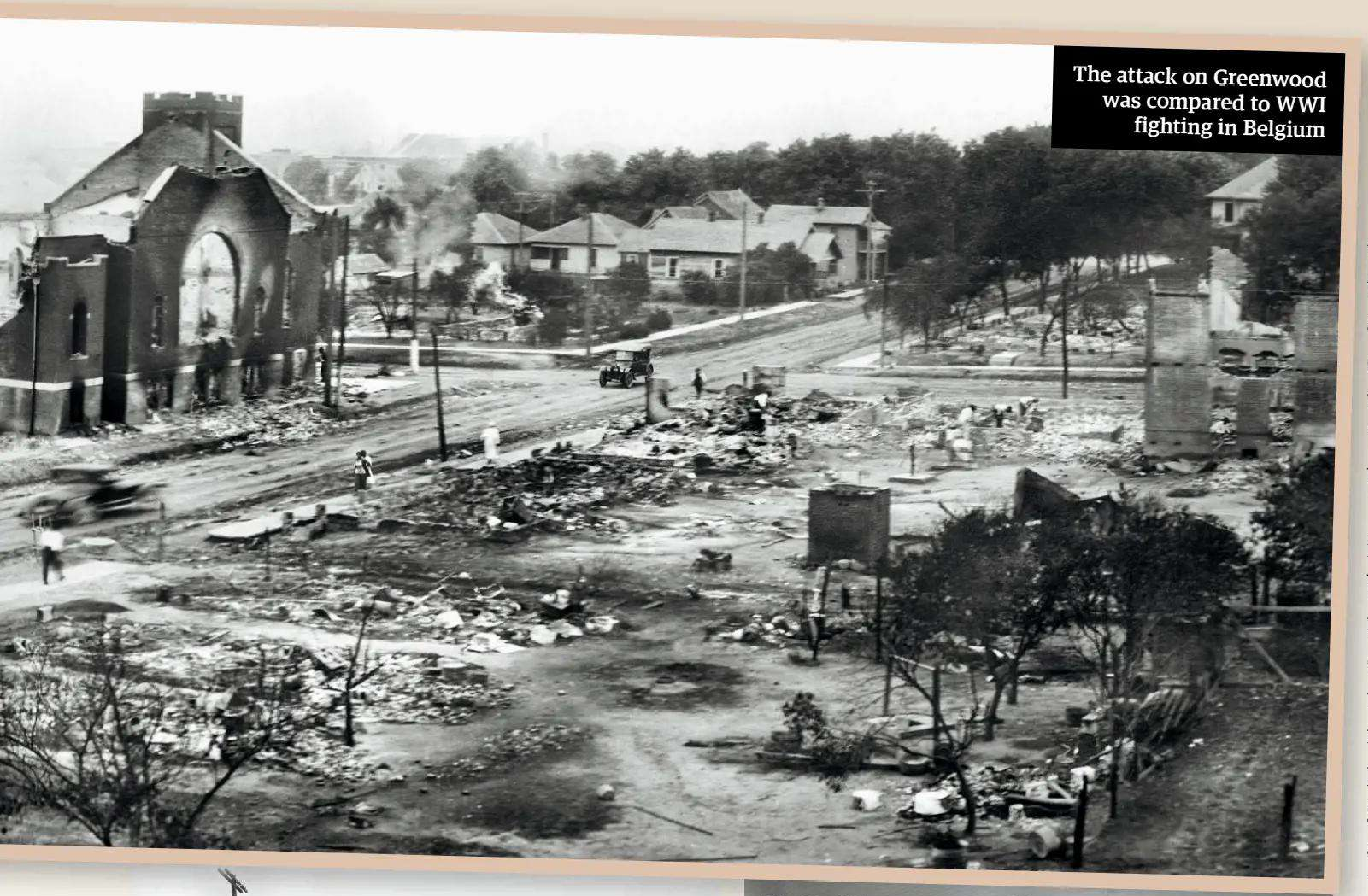
What we understand happened on the 31 May and 1 June 1921

AFTERNOON, 31 MAY
The *Tulsa Tribune* publishes an afternoon edition claiming that Black 19-year-old Dick Rowland had been arrested for assaulting 17-year-old Sarah Page, a white elevator operator in Tulsa. The newspaper's story is untrue but word spreads that a lynching of Rowland is being planned for that evening.

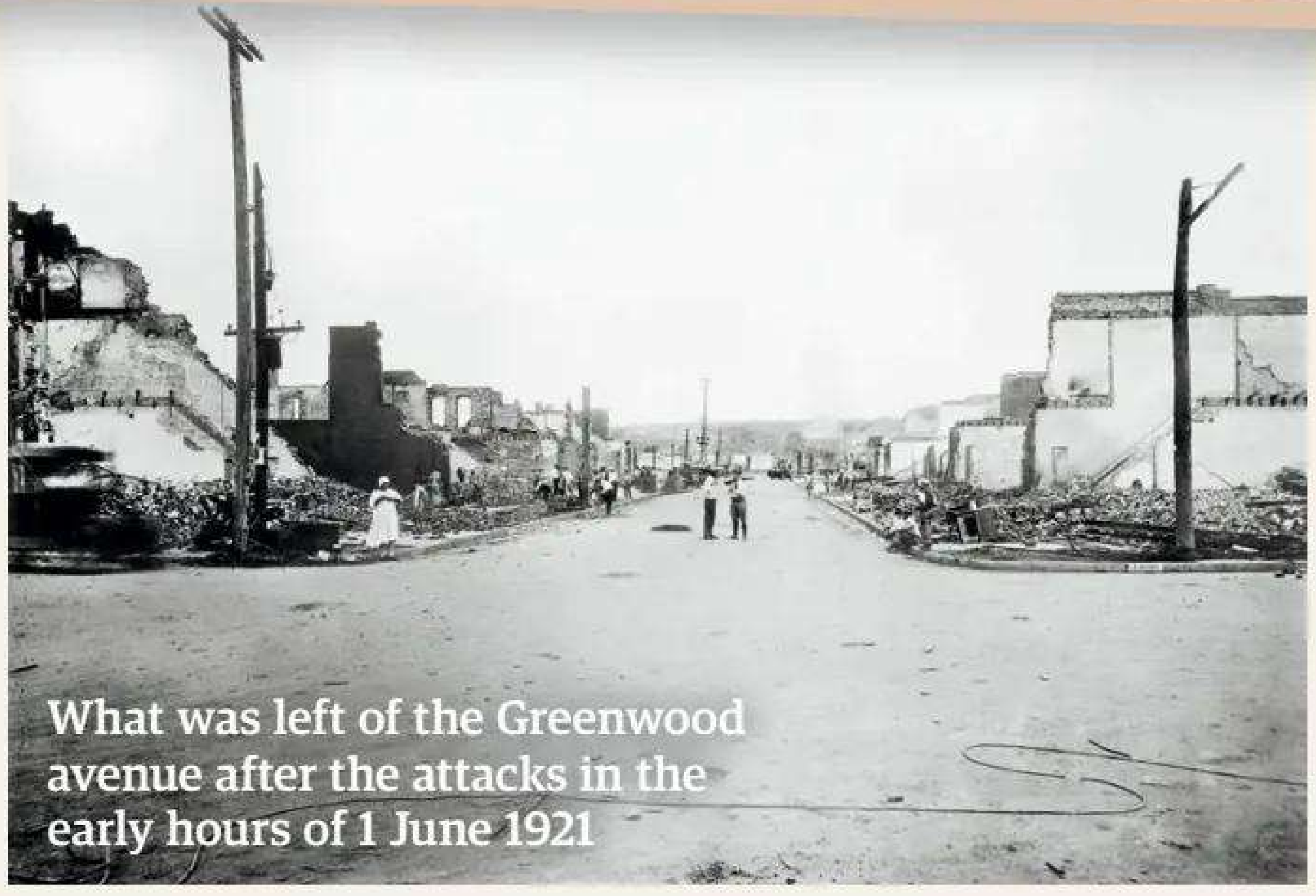
19:30
Hundreds of white Tulsa residents gather outside the Tulsa County Courthouse in which Rowland is being held and demand that he be handed over to them, but the sheriff refuses. The top floor is barricaded in an attempt to protect Rowland.

21:00
The African American community in Greenwood hears about what's happening and organises a party of about 25 armed men, many of them WWI veterans who still have their guns, to offer aid to the sheriff in defending the courthouse. The sheriff turns down their help. Meanwhile, an attempt is being made to break into the local National Guard armoury, but the white mob is turned away by the guardsmen.

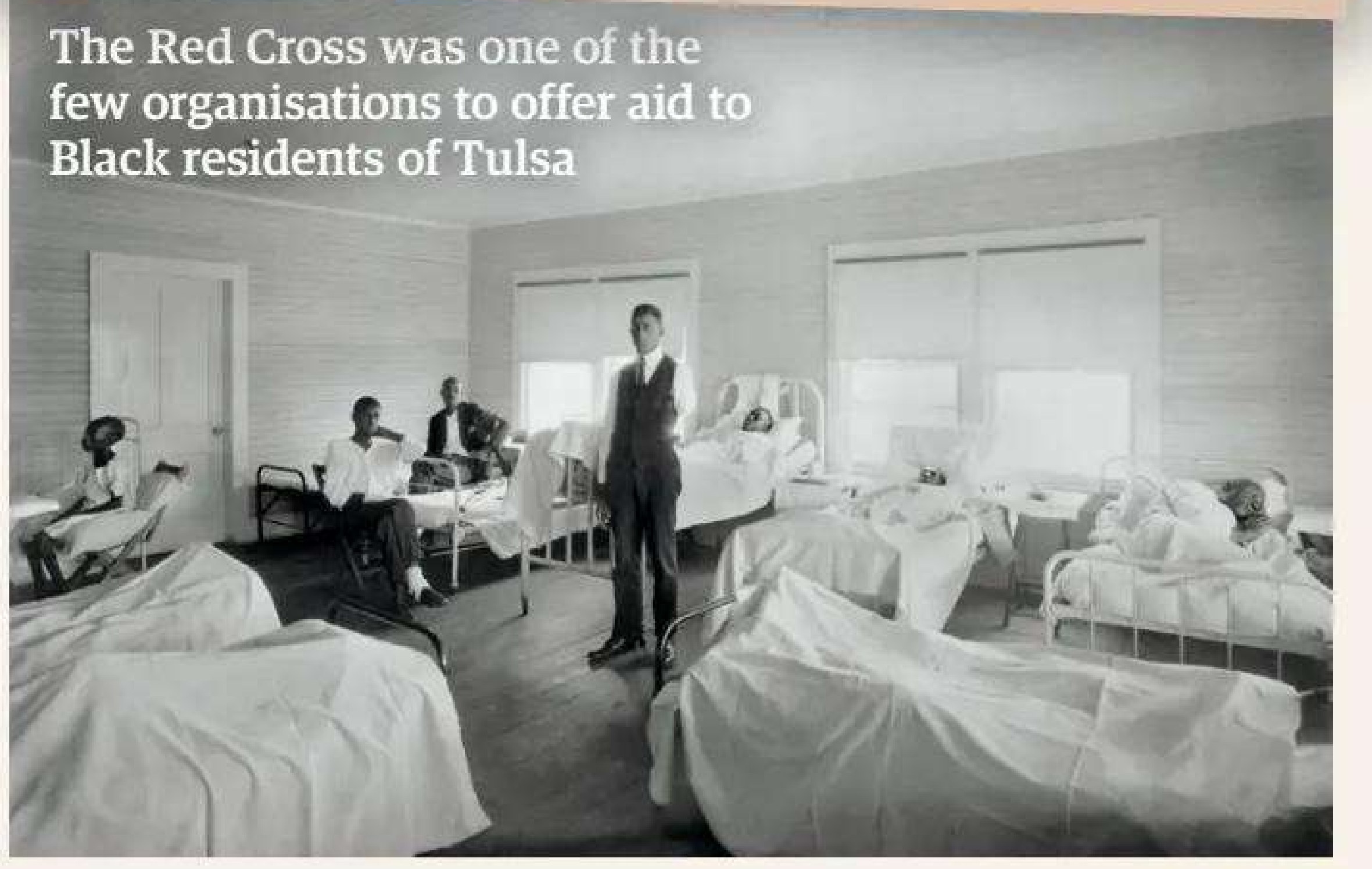
22:00
False rumours spread to Greenwood that the mob is storming the courthouse and so a second group is formed, now estimated to be about 75 Black men, to again offer help to the authorities. The white mob now numbers between 1,500 and 2,000 people. At some point, possibly as the Greenwood residents are leaving, someone tries to disarm one of the Black men and the gun goes off. Rioting outside the courthouse ensues.



The attack on Greenwood was compared to WWI fighting in Belgium



What was left of the Greenwood avenue after the attacks in the early hours of 1 June 1921



The Red Cross was one of the few organisations to offer aid to Black residents of Tulsa

> *"Tulsa was a tinderbox – a powder keg – in 1921"*

Richard Lloyd Jones to retract the piece. As it happens, no copies with this editorial have been found, as the only known surviving copy has the offending article torn out. But the surviving report on the incident itself paints Rowland as having premeditated his assault and even scratching Page and tearing her clothes, neither of which appear to be true. As it happens, Rowland was picked up by police and booked into custody at the County Courthouse not long after the *Tribune* hit the newsstands. Anticipating trouble, the police barricaded the floor where the cells were located. As 31 May progressed, a lynch mob of a few hundred men, women and children gathered in front of the courthouse.

"The Black community knew the courthouse wasn't going to be protected," says Rains. "If it hadn't been able to hold off a mob trying to kill a white man, there was no way at this point to do so for a Black man." On two occasions a small group of armed Black men from Greenwood (many of them WWI veterans and still carrying their military-issue firearms) offered to help the sheriff protect Rowland and the courthouse, but they were declined. As darkness fell the mob grew to number a few thousand (by some estimates) and tensions flared, resulting in someone trying to disarm one of the Black men. "At some point, and nobody knows why, there's gunfire," says Rains. "And immediately when this shot went off the white mob started shooting."

A full-blown race riot ensued as around 75 men from Greenwood began to retreat and lynchers began taking out their vengeance on any Black person they saw. Car-loads of armed white men drove around downtown Tulsa, firing at people as they went, and one unarmed man was shot dead in a movie theatre. According to witnesses, the police were deputising members of the white mob, giving them authority to kill African Americans as they saw fit in the name of putting down an 'uprising'. But this was just the beginning and by midnight fires were started on the outskirts of the Greenwood district, before a quiet finally descended on the city.

The peace didn't last long, though, and a second, more coordinated phase developed. "A lot of people, when they talk about it, act as if the entire thing was this kind of chaotic mob," says Rains. "There's a chase and then they just kind of lost their minds and destroyed Greenwood, but that's not true. You can almost divide the massacre into two parts: a battle and then a pogrom, just an absolute catastrophe."

Barney Cleaver was a Black deputy sheriff and had been at the courthouse for most of the day. Returning home to Greenwood, he sent his wife and sister-in-law to safety somewhere further out of town. As he sat in a building near the train tracks on the edge of Greenwood at around 5am he heard a whistle, followed by relentless gunfire. Thousands of armed white people had surrounded the district and were now invading.

"The white mob that invaded the Greenwood district looted pawn shops and sporting goods shops downtown for weapons," says Johnson. "Many were deputised by local law enforcement. The mob prevented firefighters from putting

Getty Images, Alamy

BEFORE MIDNIGHT

The white mob is now attacking Black Tulsa residents throughout the city. One Black man is killed in a movie theatre. There are also reports of cars full of white men shooting Black people indiscriminately. Some buildings on the outskirts of Greenwood are attacked. The Tulsa police force deputises some of the white mob and, according to witnesses, authorises them to kill any African Americans they see. Meanwhile, the National Guard is mobilised but spends most of the night protecting white neighbourhoods in fear of a retaliatory attack, which never happens.

BEFORE DAWN, 1 JUNE

During the night plans are made to invade the Greenwood district. Groups of white men, numbering in the thousands, line up to surround the district on three sides.

DAWN

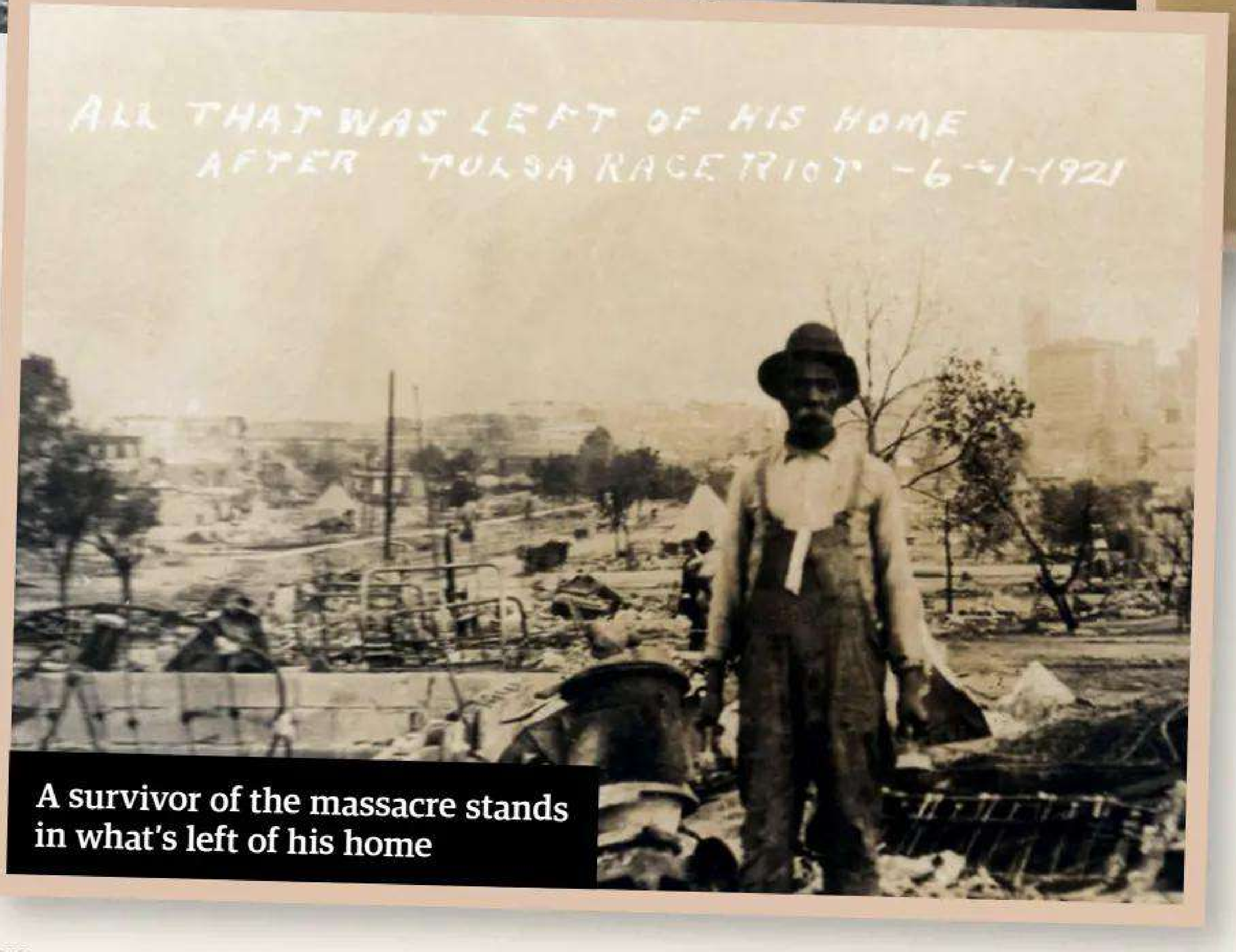
As dawn breaks, whistles are blown and the rioters invade en masse. They begin looting and firebombing homes and businesses, attacking and killing residents as they go. At least one machine gun is used by the mob and eye-witnesses claim that a plane is employed to drop incendiary devices onto buildings. An area of around 35 blocks is destroyed.

09:15

National Guard troops arrive at Greenwood, by which time most of the district is either burned down or still on fire. Martial law is declared as authorities look to reclaim control. Over 6,000 Black residents are held at the Convention Hall and Fairgrounds by police and Guardsman.

Survivors were left to sift through the rubble in search of their belongings

No building was spared the wrath of the white mob, even the church


ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF HIS HOME
AFTER TULSA RACE RIOT -6-1-1921

A survivor of the massacre stands in what's left of his home

"Most historians now assume that it was fully preorganised and preplanned"

out fires and there's also evidence of some organisation and coordination among these criminal elements."

As the mob went door to door, ransacking homes and businesses, the residents of Greenwood attempted to flee or fight back. The unlucky ones were shot in their homes or in the street, while the more fortunate were arrested by the police and National Guard. Over 6,000 people from Greenwood were held at the Convention Hall and Fairgrounds in the days that followed. Meanwhile on Standpipe Hill a small group attempted to defend their homes and fierce fighting took place, but ultimately the people of Greenwood were outgunned and outnumbered.

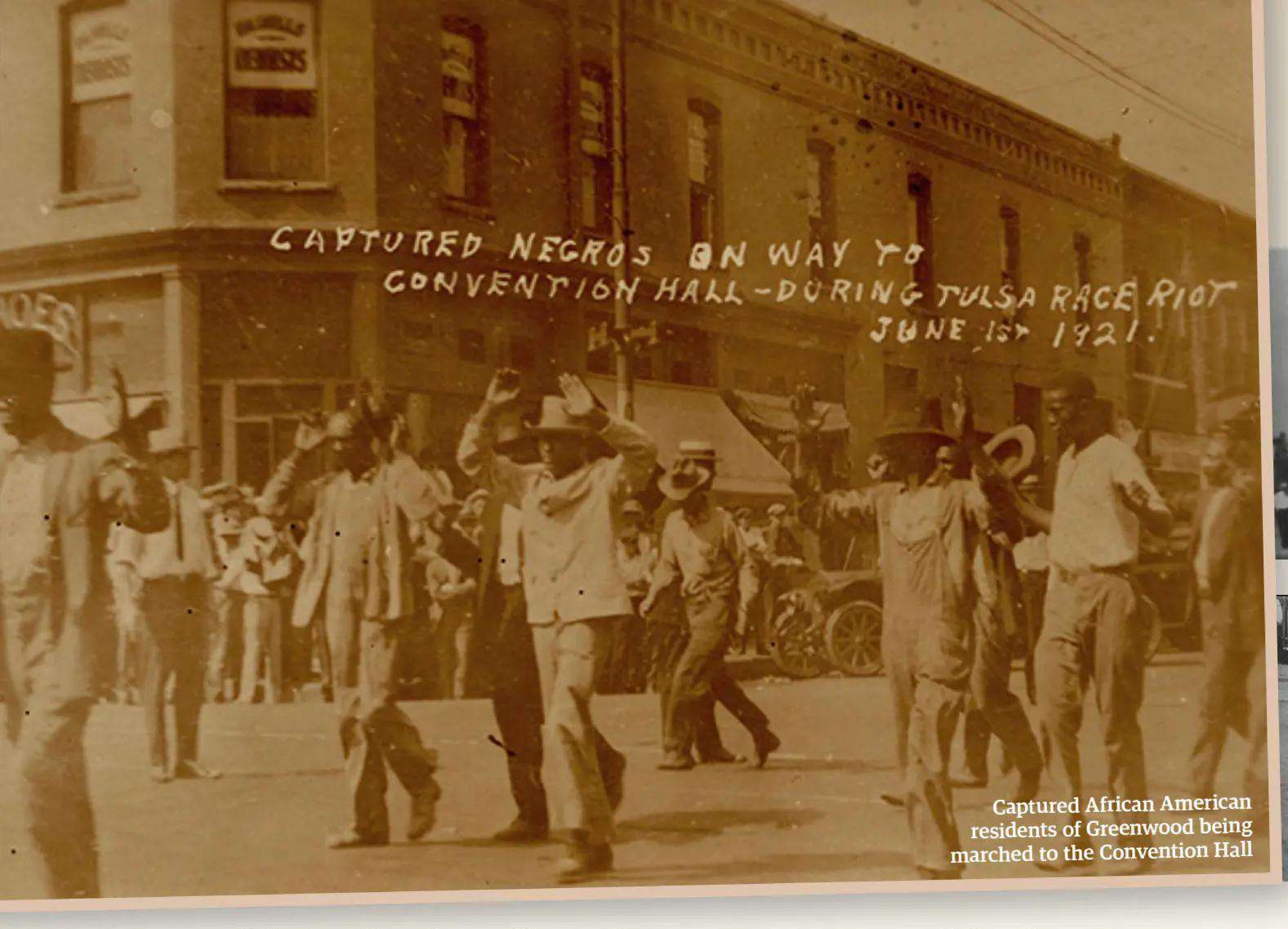
"Most historians now assume that it was fully preorganised and preplanned," says Rains. "But there's still the question of who did that? Who organised this invasion? Probably city officials were involved, and the police." However, it does remain unclear. One of the arguments that some greater level of local authority was involved is the use of at least one plane to drop incendiary devices on Greenwood, which would go some way to explain how quickly the district was destroyed. Several eye-witnesses claimed planes were involved.

"They dropped some kind of incendiary devices. There are enough sources that refer to it, including [local Greenwood attorney] BC Franklin's that was discovered in the last five years," Rains explains. Even the *Tulsa Tribune* agreed that planes were involved, although it claimed they were doing reconnaissance, finding residents who were shooting at the white crowd.

The final death toll is believed to be around 300, although early estimates originally put it at only 30. On 1 June the *Tulsa Tribune* claimed 68 African Americans and nine white people had died in the 'Race War' overnight. The property damage was easier to quantify. "There were five structures left, and none of them were undamaged," says Rains.

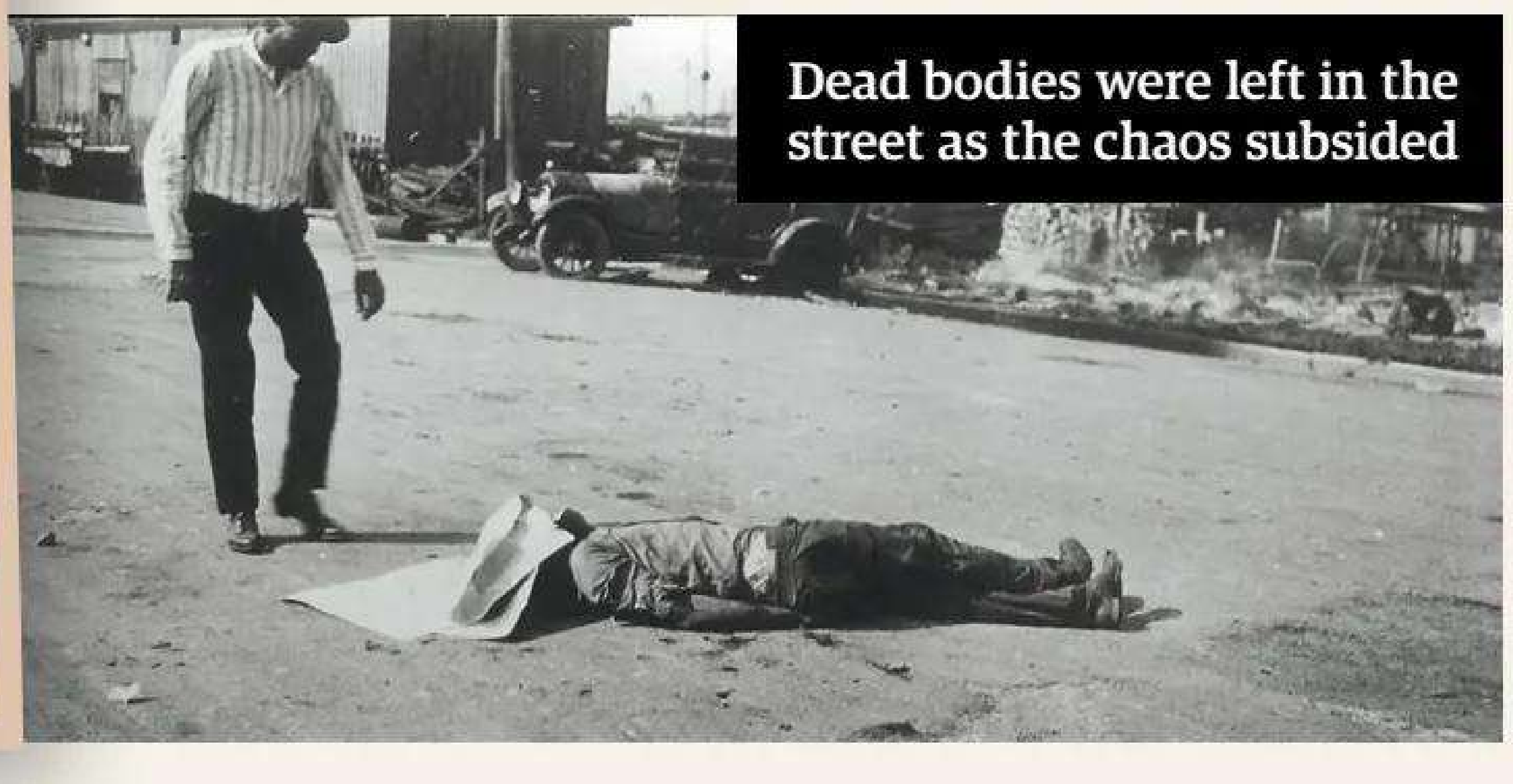
While martial law was declared later in the morning of 1 June and the killing finally stopped, the cruelty and injustice hadn't ended. Those residents detained by the police and National Guard had to be vouched for by a white employer before they were released. What's more, the city authorities blocked anyone rebuilding in the

Greenwood residents began rebuilding their community as soon as they could


CAPTURED NEGROS ON WAY TO
CONVENTION HALL - DURING TULSA RACE RIOT
JUNE 1st 1921.

Captured African American residents of Greenwood being marched to the Convention Hall

A man seemingly surrendering during the attack on Greenwood



Dead bodies were left in the street as the chaos subsided

Greenwood district unless they could prove the materials being used would not be flammable. Segregation meant that access to such materials was incredibly hard without aid. Meanwhile, donations of money from outside areas were blocked, meaning churches and groups like the NAACP (The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) couldn't help. But the people of Greenwood didn't back down.

"BC Franklin worked from a white tent because everything had been burned to the ground," says Rains. "He said to fellow Greenwood residents, 'You rebuild, I will represent you for free if they arrest you.' He appealed a ruling against one of the people who'd rebuilt their property all the way to the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The Tulsa municipal government's policy was ruled unconstitutional and Greenwood residents were able to rebuild. But if that hadn't happened they would have entirely lost their property as well."

Greenwood was rebuilt, although many families never recovered from their losses. Rowland was exonerated and all charges against him were dropped, and while a grand jury was assembled to investigate the massacre, no convictions were ever made. The *Tulsa Tribune* headline summarising the judgement read: 'Grand Jury Blames Negroes for Inciting Race Rioting; Whites Clearly Exonerated'. It wasn't until 1997 and the Tulsa Race Riot Commission that the state of Oklahoma properly investigated what had happened, even using radar to look for potential mass graves. The commission proposed that the state should pay $33 million in restitution to the 121 victims who were still alive at that time, but no action was taken on that recommendation. Finally, though, 100 years later, the magnitude and horror of the Tulsa Race Massacre seems clear and its victims are getting the recognition they deserve.

Getty Images, Alamy

Who was BC Franklin?

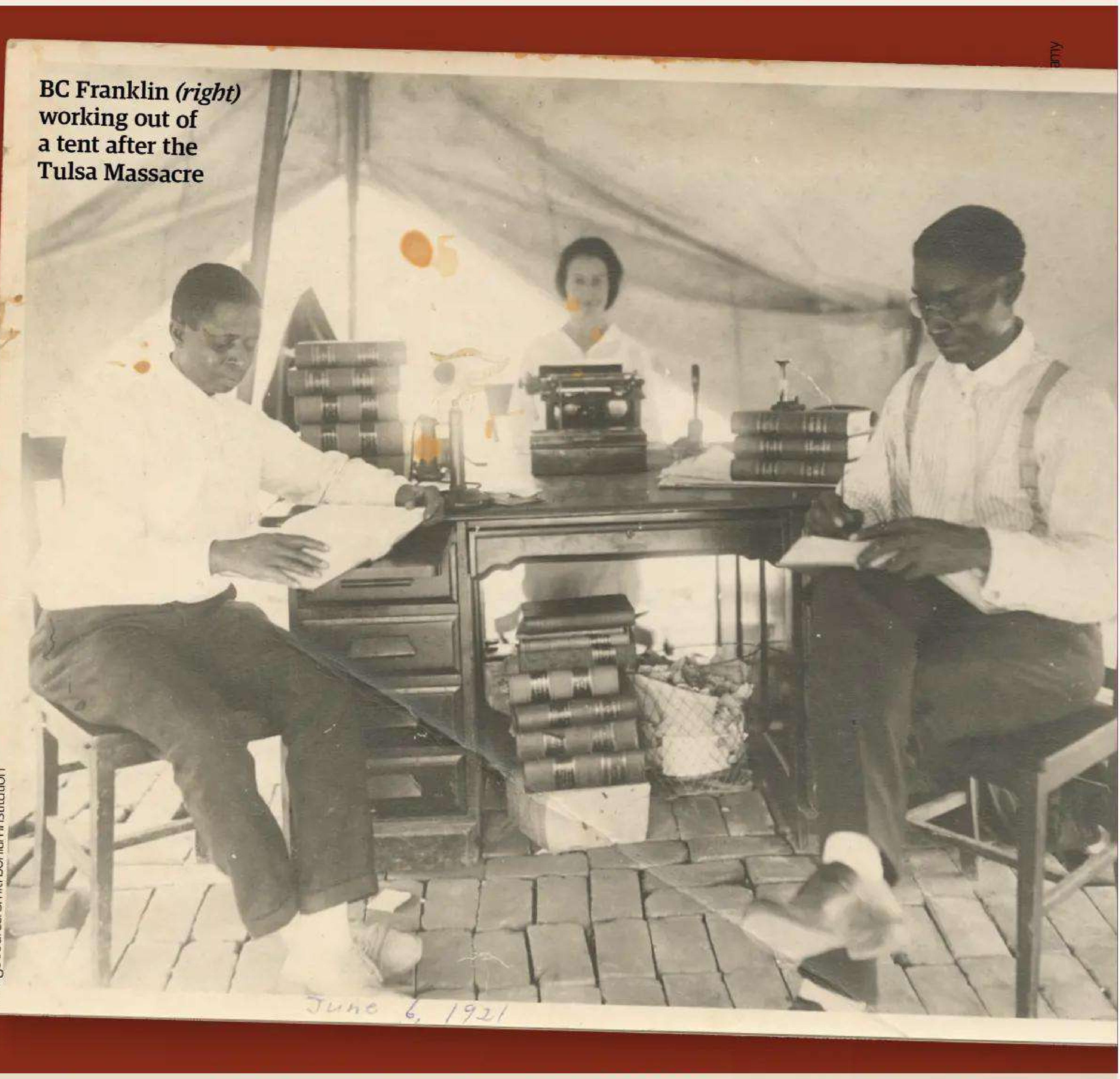
The man who fought for justice and whose personal account only recently resurfaced

An eyewitness account of the massacre in Tulsa was discovered in 2015 and donated to the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and Culture. The ten-page manuscript – written by Buck Colbert Franklin, an attorney in Tulsa at the time – shed new light on the terrible events of 1921.

BC Franklin was born in the Chickasaw Nation, a Native American territory before becoming part of Oklahoma. Having experienced racial prejudice within the American judicial system early in his career as a lawyer, he committed himself to defending his fellow African Americans. After the 1921 massacre, he represented the survivors when the city council attempted to block Black residents from rebuilding the Greenwood district. The case went to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, where Franklin won.

He began to write an autobiography, but died in 1960 before it was finished. The book was published posthumously by his son John Hope Franklin, a prominent civil rights advocate involved in the Brown v. Board of Education case. However, BC's account of the massacre did not surface until after John's death in 2009.

Within the account, BC Franklin describes the growing anger and violence of the day, and confirms the use of turpentine balls dropped from the air to set buildings on fire. It's a powerful first-hand description by a gifted writer in which the heroism and defiant spirit of the community that BC committed his life to serving is conveyed in harrowing detail.



BC Franklin *(right)* working out of a tent after the Tulsa Massacre

Image source: Smithsonian Institution

Crimes of the Ku Klux Klan

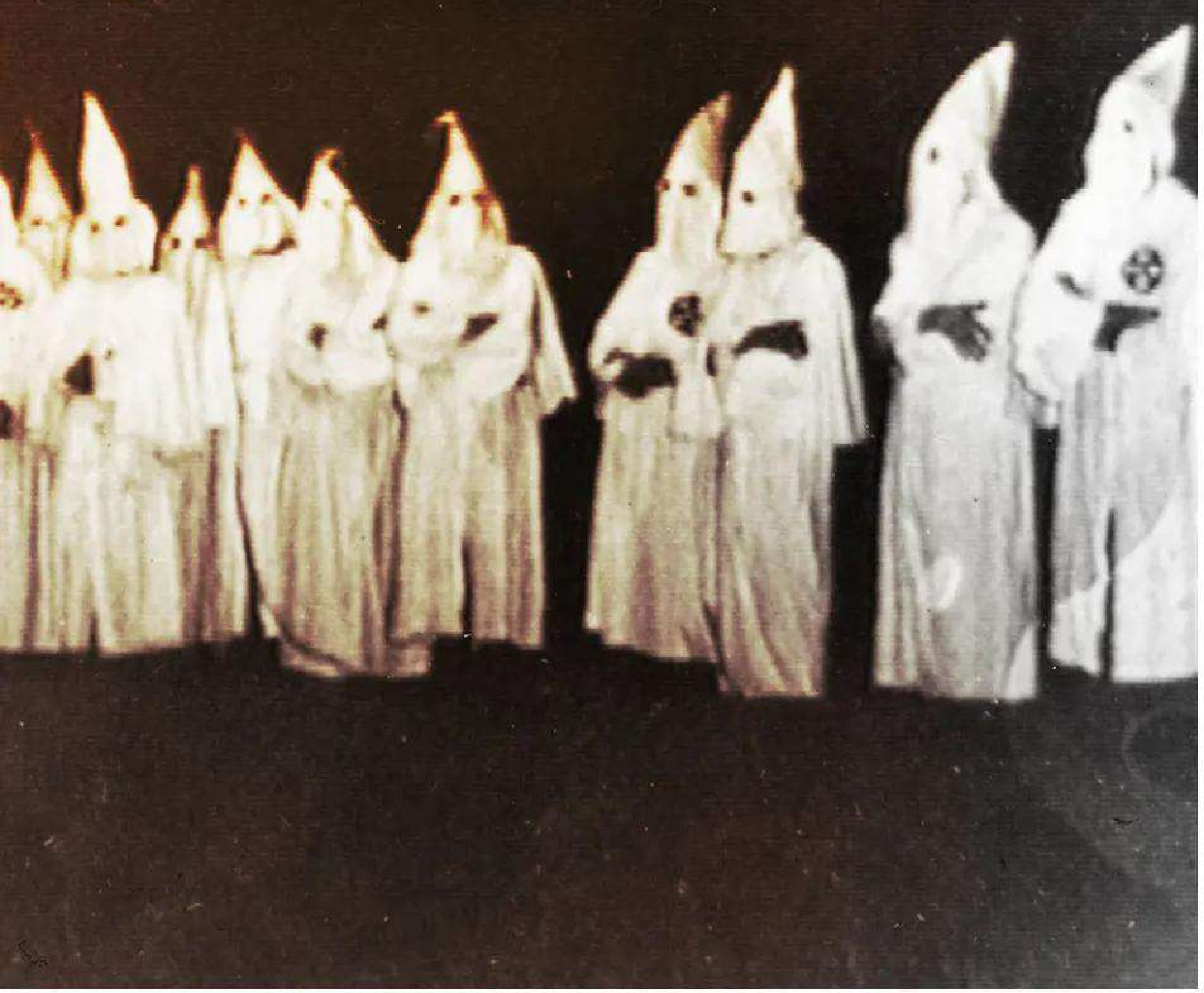
Known as the KKK, the Ku Klux Klan is perhaps the most famous white supremacist hate group in the USA

Written by Catherine Curzon

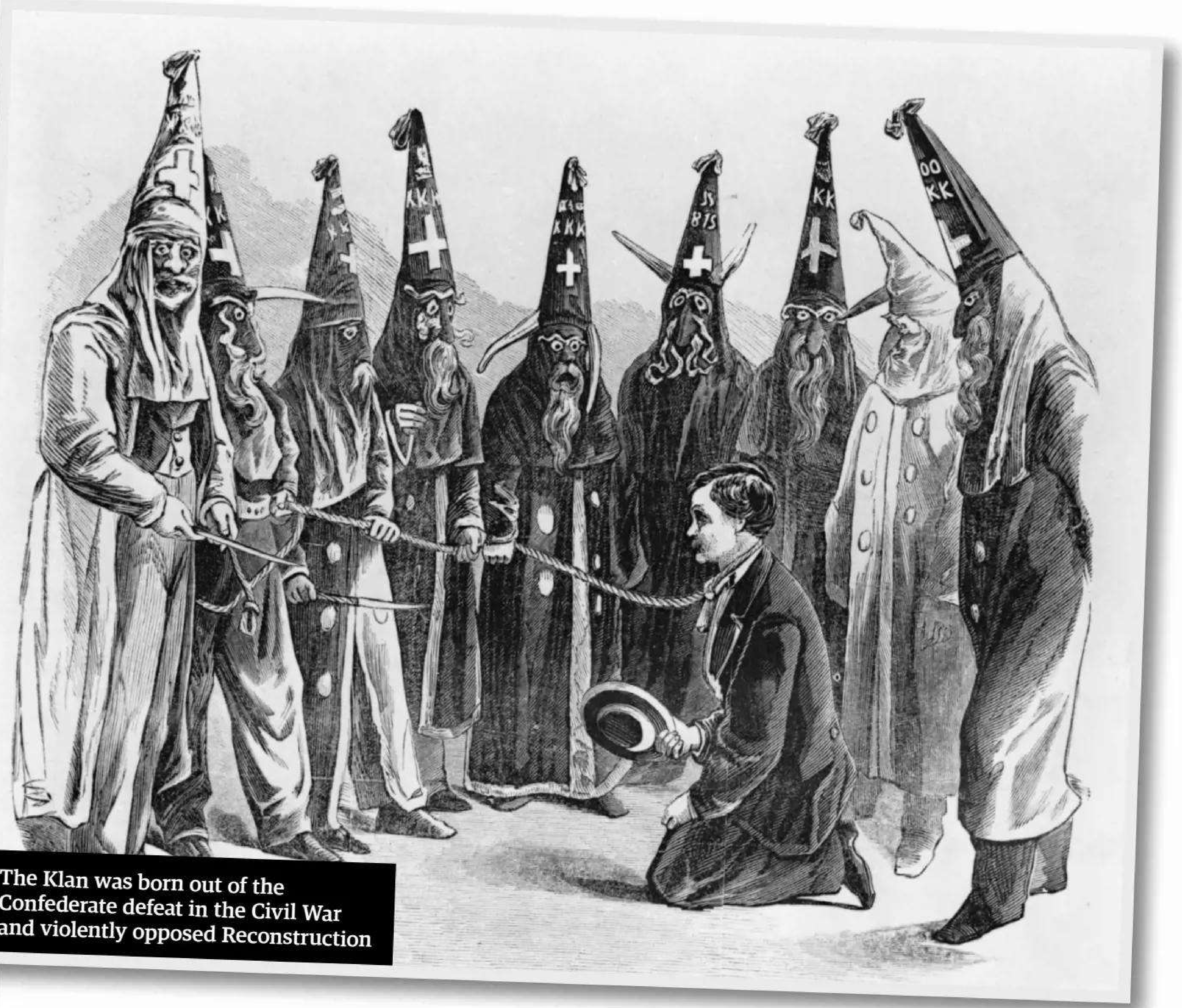
Established in December 1865 in Pulaski, Tennessee, by Confederate war veterans, the Ku Klux Klan is arguably the most notorious right-wing extremist group in America. Instantly recognisable from its ghostly white uniforms and pointed hoods, the Klan's origins lay in the Confederate defeat in the Civil War. It began life as a vigilante group in the South, dedicated to violently resisting Reconstruction. In this early First Klan era, the group sought to establish white supremacy in the face of increasing federal pressure. No methods were off limits and members resorted to brutal techniques including lynching, murder, and terrorism.

Though the First Klan was subdued by government forces, it reemerged as a force to be reckoned with in 1915. With the KKK's reputation given a boost by the epic film *The Birth of a Nation*, which made heroes of the hooded figures, the Second Klan broke out of the South and spread across the nation. Fuelled by anti-immigrant sentiment in the early 20th century, by the 1920s it boasted thousands of members and had achieved immense popularity. However, internal strife, scandal and financial mismanagement once again led the Klan into a nosedive.

The Third Klan reached its peak during the Civil Rights era, gaining impetus through the 1950s and 1960s as it stood in opposition to the new social movement. However, it was never able to recapture its massive second-wave success and today it is a splintered network of small local groups with no national influence to speak of. Considered a terrorist organisation, the KKK has lost much of its political power, but it still retains its notorious reputation. As a symbol of white racial hatred in modern America, it occupies a unique position in the nation's psyche.



Notorious for burning crosses, the Ku Klux Klan thrive on terfor and intimidation



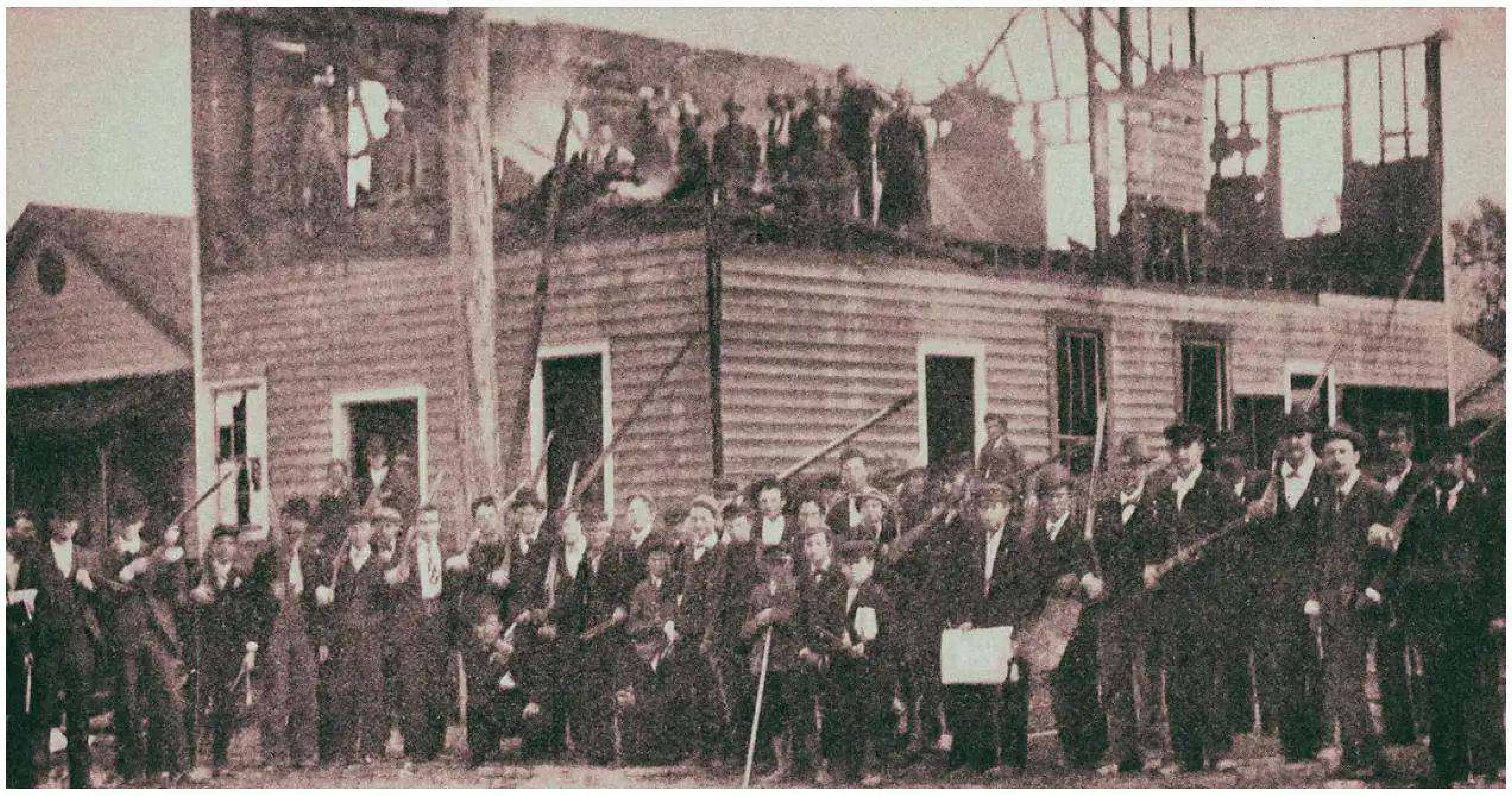
The Klan was born out of the Confederate defeat in the Civil War and violently opposed Reconstruction

THE WILMINGTON COUP

During 1898, North Carolina's Democratic Party ran a campaign of intimidation intended to prevent African Americans from voting and thereby remove the Fusionist (Republican-Populist) government in WIlmington, North Carolina. Black middle class citizens in Wilmington enjoyed financial success and held public offices, leading to resentment from their Democratic opponents, who established a campaign of white supremacy that exploded into violence.

Two days after achieving victory at the elections on 8 November due to election fraud and terror tactics that kept Black voters from the polls, a mob of 2,000 white supremacists razed the Black-owned *Daily Record* newspaper to the ground, then led a savage assault on African American areas. The exact number of their victims is still unknown, but has been estimated at being as high as 60, and forced powerful Black office holders to resign at the point of a gun.

Initially the violence was reported as a race riot perpetrated by Black people against whites, with whites eventually leading a coup that was necessary to restore the peace and save lives. Today we recognise it for what it was, a savage massacre that violently shattered the progress made post-Reconstruction in North Carolina.



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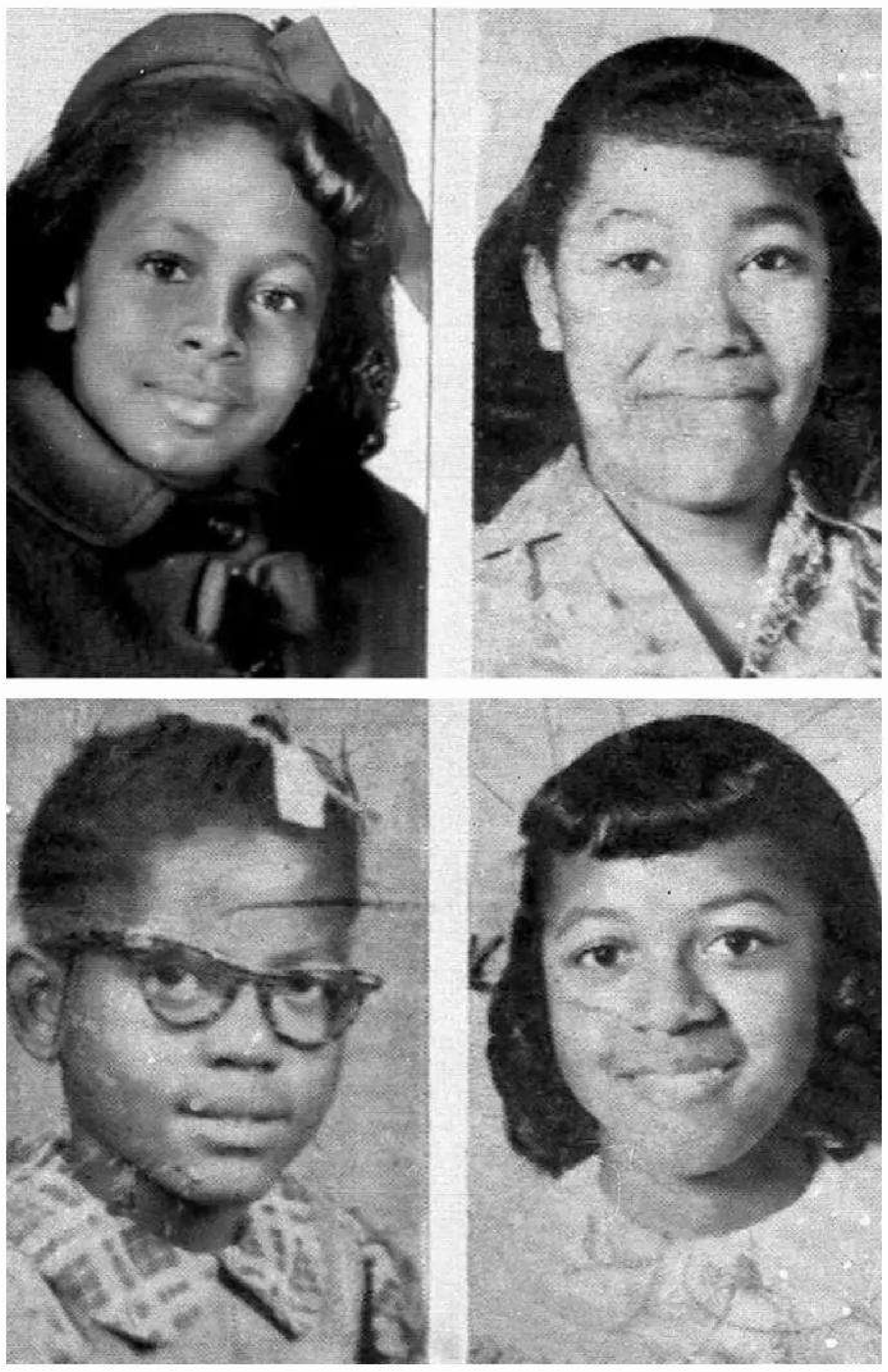


THE 16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH BOMBING

At 10.22 am on 15 September 1963, a bomb containing 19 sticks of dynamite detonated beneath the steps of the 16 Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. The church was an important location for civil rights meetings held by speakers including Martin Luther King Jr.

The church was full of worshippers that morning and four Black girls were killed instantly; they were 11-year-old Denise McNair, and Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley, all aged 14. Many others were injured, including Addie Mae's sister, Sarah, who was partially blinded in the blast. Violence broke out after the bombing, with the National Guard sent to Birmingham to calm tensions.

As the world recoiled in horror, the focus of the investigation eventually fell on four members of a KKK splinter group called the Cabana Boys: Thomas Blanton Jr, Herman Cash, Robert Chambliss, and Bobby Cherry. A lack of physical evidence meant that none were ever charged with the murders.

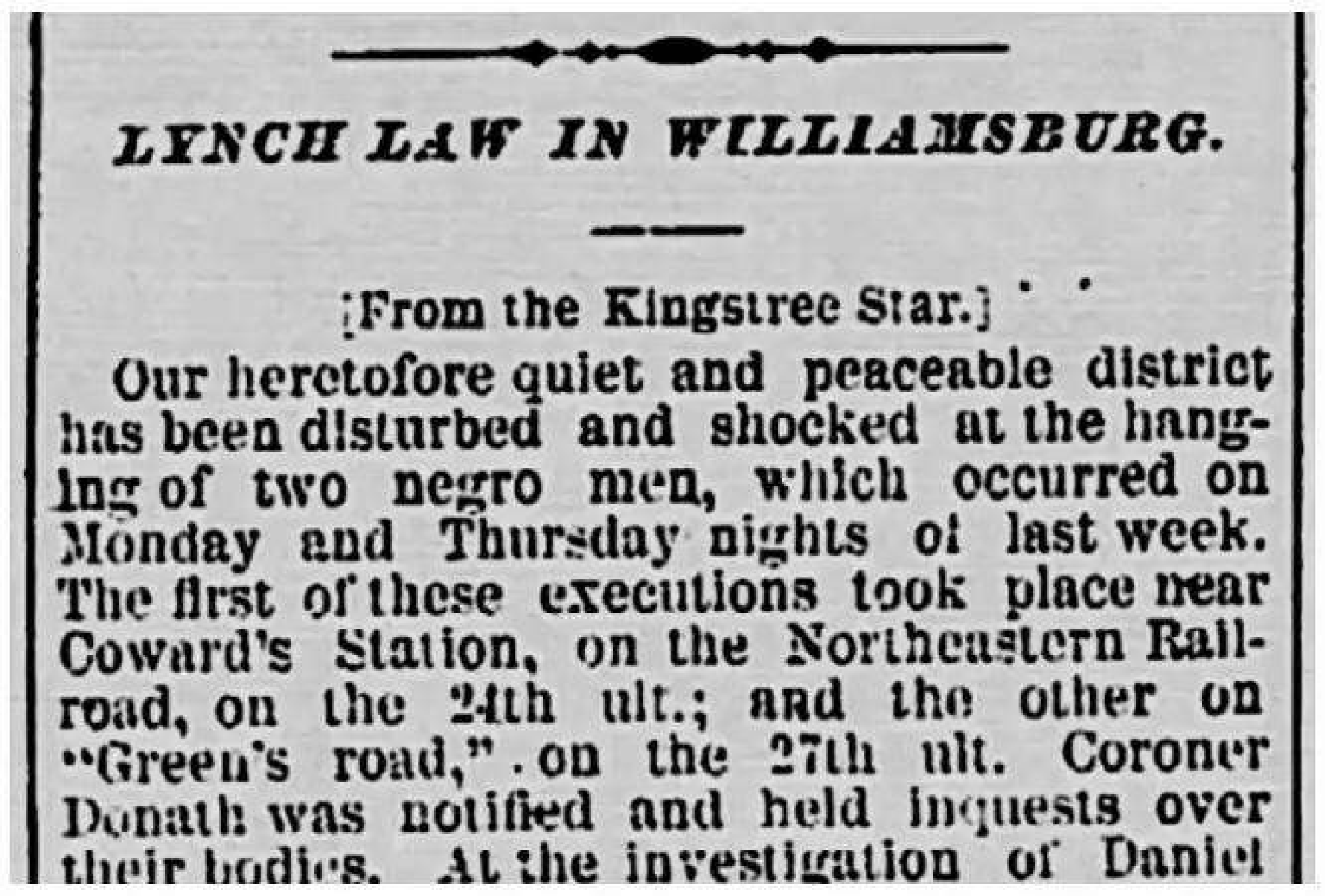
The case was reopened when evidence that had previously been kept from prosecutors by J Edgar Hoover came to light, resulting in Chamblis receiving a life sentence in 1977. Years later, the bombing was revisited again during a review of cold cases and though Cash had already died, Blanton and Cherry were finally sent down for life.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA KKK TRIALS

The South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, which occurred during 1871-72, were a pioneering federal attempt to stem the tide of white supremacist violence and protect the rights of newly-freed African Americans. The foundation of the trials came in October 1871, when President Ulysses S Grant declared nine counties in South Carolina to be in a state of active rebellion and sent in federal troops to arrest white supremacists, Hundreds of Ku Klux Klan members were arrested whilst others went on the run, fearful of prosecution,

US District Attorney David T Corbin led the prosecution and secured approximately 140 convictions. Most of these were achieved via the Enforcement Act, which made voter intimation and suppression illegal, and were helped by the willingness of brave Black witnesses to bear witness in court against the outrages that the Klansmen had perpetrated.

KKK activity all but ceased during the trials but, as support for Reconstruction began to drop off and the North and South sought reconciliation, the federal appetite for the cases waned. In 1873, President Grant wiped out the cases against all the Klansmen who had yet to be tried and pardoned those who had been convicted. The Ku Klux Klan were free to perpetrate terror once more.



LYNCH LAW IN WILLIAMSBURG.

[From the Kingstree Star.]

Our heretofore quiet and peaceable district has been disturbed and shocked at the hanging of two negro men, which occurred on Monday and Thursday nights of last week. The first of these executions took place near Coward's Station, on the Northeastern Railroad, on the 24th ult.; and the other on "Green's road," on the 27th ult. Coroner Donath was notified and held inquests over their bodies. At the investigation of Daniel

> *"Arrests were helped by the willingness of Black witnesses to bear witness against the outrages that the Klansmen had perpetrated"*

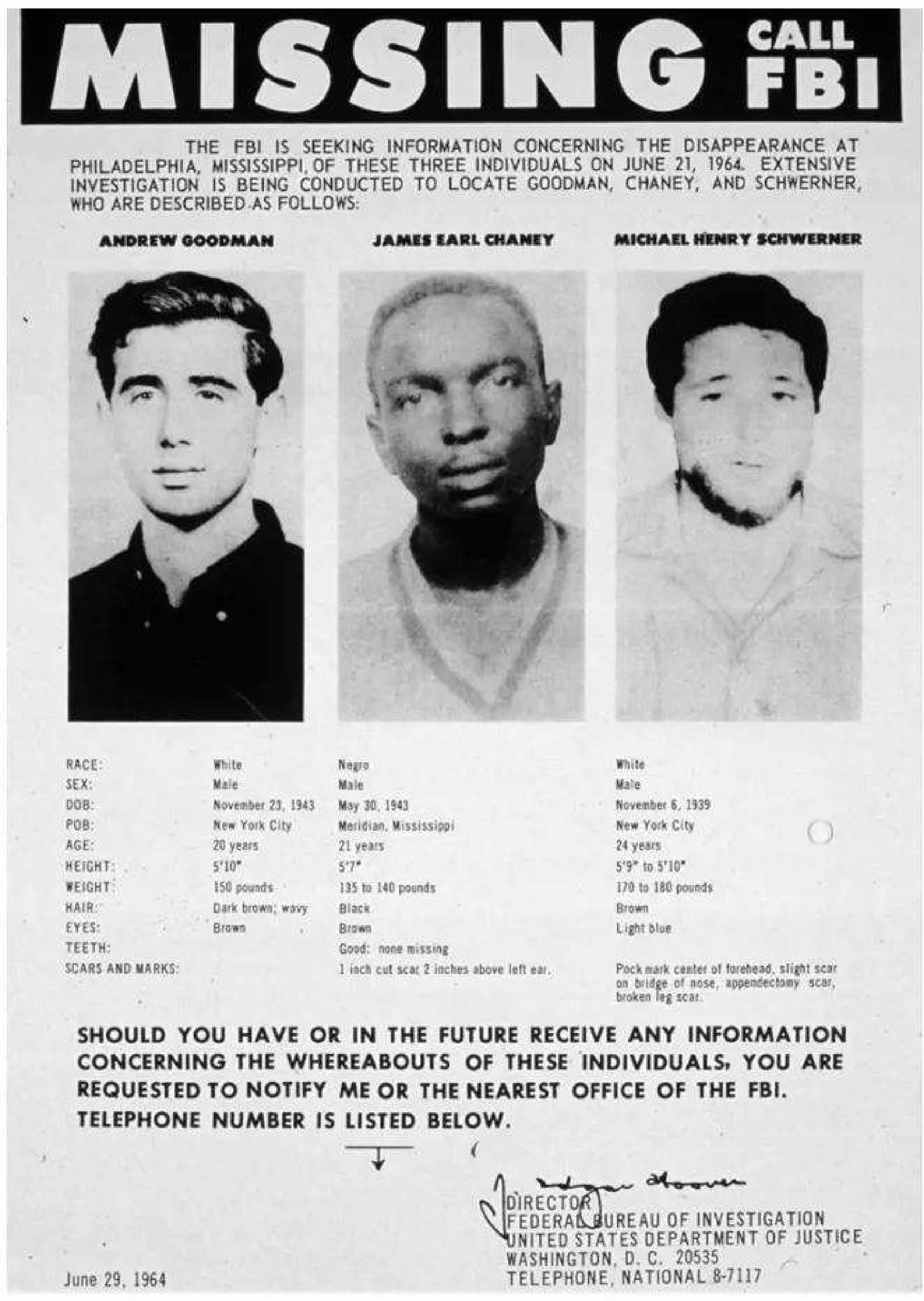
FREEDOM SUMMER MURDERS

During Freedom Summer, activists came to Mississippi to encourage Black voters to register, set up Freedom Schools, and stand against discriminatory laws. Three of these civil rights activists, local African American James Chaney and Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, both Jewish volunteers from New York, were working in Neshoba County when they were brutally murdered on 21 June 1964.

The men were investigating the burning of Mt Zion Methodist Church when they were arrested by Klansman and Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price on a speeding charge. Following their release that evening, they were apprehended by a Ku Klux Klan mob. After being beaten they were shot dead and their bodies buried. The only trace of the men was their burned out car.

Their disappearances led to a massive investigation known as the Mississippi Burning. Eventually, a local tip-off led to the discovery of the bodies and in December, 18 suspects including Price were arrested. America's reaction to the crime sent shockwaves through the country and helped the passage of the Civil Rights Act that same year.

Eventually, seven of the defendants were convicted, including Price, but none on a charge of murder. The group's ringleader, Edgar Ray Killen, was freed because a single juror refused to convict a Baptist preacher; 40 years later, Killen was finally handed a sentence of 60 years for his part in the killings.



MISSING CALL FBI

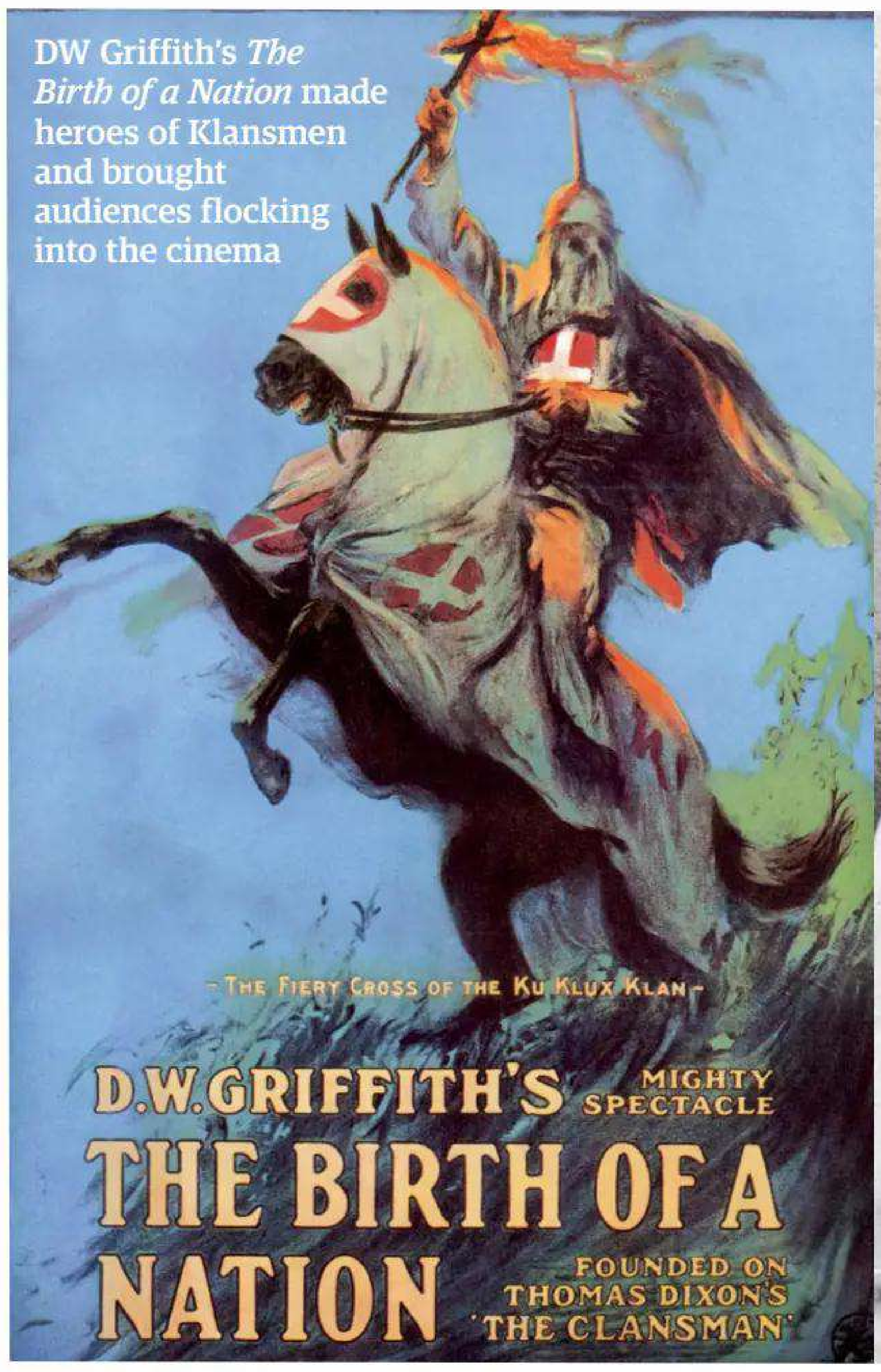
THE FBI IS SEEKING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DISAPPEARANCE AT PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI, OF THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS ON JUNE 21, 1964. EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION IS BEING CONDUCTED TO LOCATE GOODMAN, CHANEY, AND SCHWERNER, WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

	ANDREW GOODMAN	JAMES EARL CHANEY	MICHAEL HENRY SCHWERNER
RACE:	White	Negro	White
SEX:	Male	Male	Male
DOB:	November 23, 1943	May 30, 1943	November 6, 1939
POB:	New York City	Meridian, Mississippi	New York City
AGE:	20 years	21 years	24 years
HEIGHT:	5'10"	5'7"	5'9" to 5'10"
WEIGHT:	150 pounds	135 to 140 pounds	170 to 180 pounds
HAIR:	Dark brown; wavy	Black	Brown
EYES:	Brown	Brown	Light blue
TEETH:		Good: none missing	
SCARS AND MARKS:		1 inch cut scar 2 inches above left ear.	Pock mark center of forehead, slight scar on bridge of nose, appendectomy scar, broken leg scar.

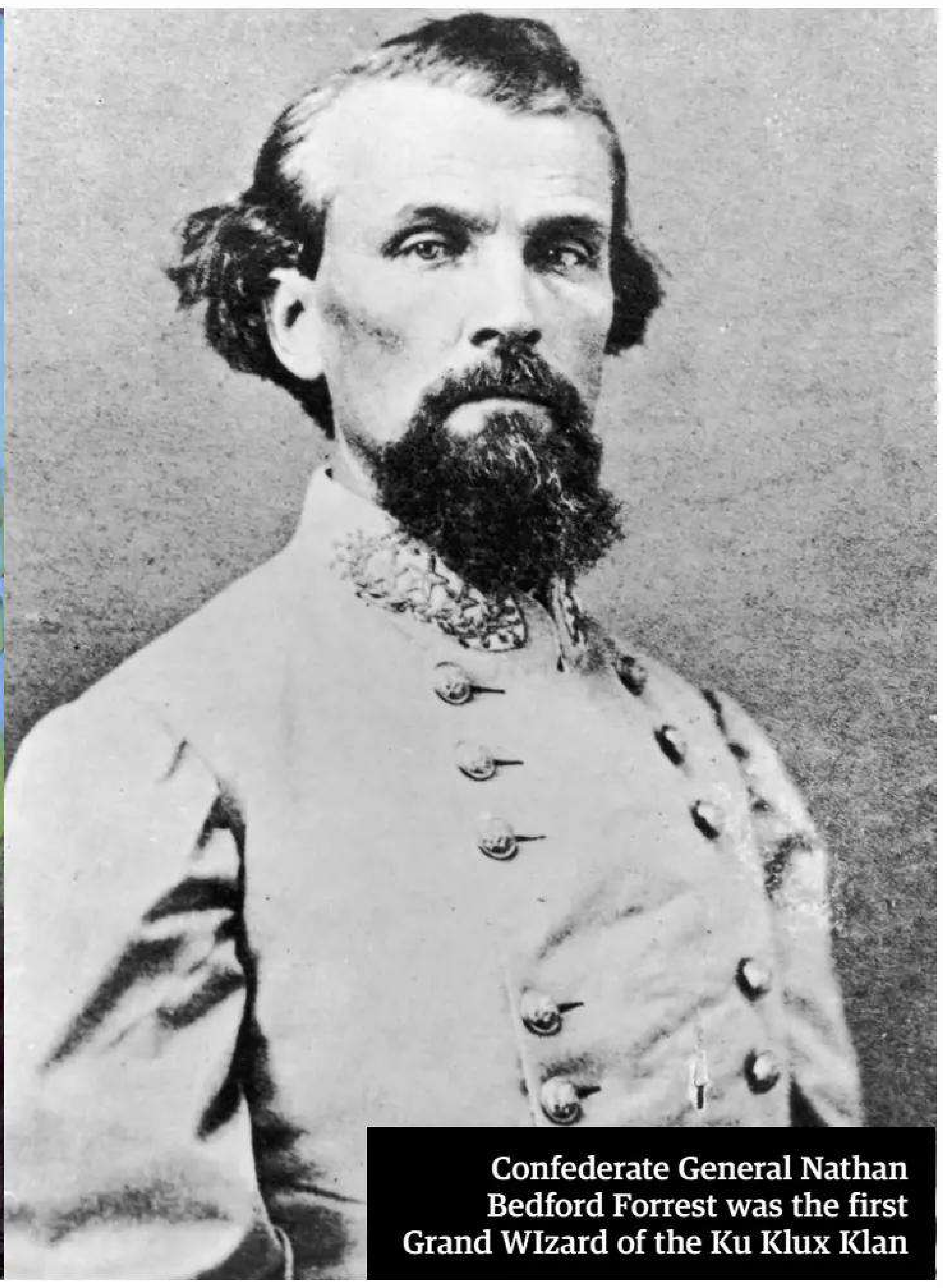
SHOULD YOU HAVE OR IN THE FUTURE RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS, YOU ARE REQUESTED TO NOTIFY ME OR THE NEAREST OFFICE OF THE FBI. TELEPHONE NUMBER IS LISTED BELOW.

J Edgar Hoover
DIRECTOR
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535
TELEPHONE, NATIONAL 8-7117

June 29, 1964


- THE FIERY CROSS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN -
D.W. GRIFFITH'S MIGHTY SPECTACLE
THE BIRTH OF A NATION
FOUNDED ON THOMAS DIXON'S 'THE CLANSMAN'

DW Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* made heroes of Klansmen and brought audiences flocking into the cinema



Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest was the first Grand WIzard of the Ku Klux Klan

THE GREENSBORO MASSACRE

One of the most notorious and horrific episodes of political violence in living memory occurred in Greensboro, North Carolina, on 3 November 1979. That day, the Communist Workers Party had organised a "Death to the Klan" rally, which was attacked by Klansmen and neo-Nazis, who opened fire on the crowd. In just 88 seconds, five people were killed; a dozen others were injured.

Despite television cameras capturing the attack, all-white juries later acquitted the shooters on the grounds of self-defence. With the families of the victims robbed of justice, the Massacre shone the spotlight on racial and class tensions. No police officers had been present at the time of the shooting and survivors questioned whether this was by coincidence or design. A subsequent Truth and Reconciliation commission concluded that both sides had engaged in violent rhetoric but that the CWP members had used their firearms that day for self-defence, whilst the Klan and neo-Nazis had intended to cause harm. It also confirmed that both the police and the FBI had been aware that violence might break out that day despite their official denials, but had done nothing whatsoever to prevent it.

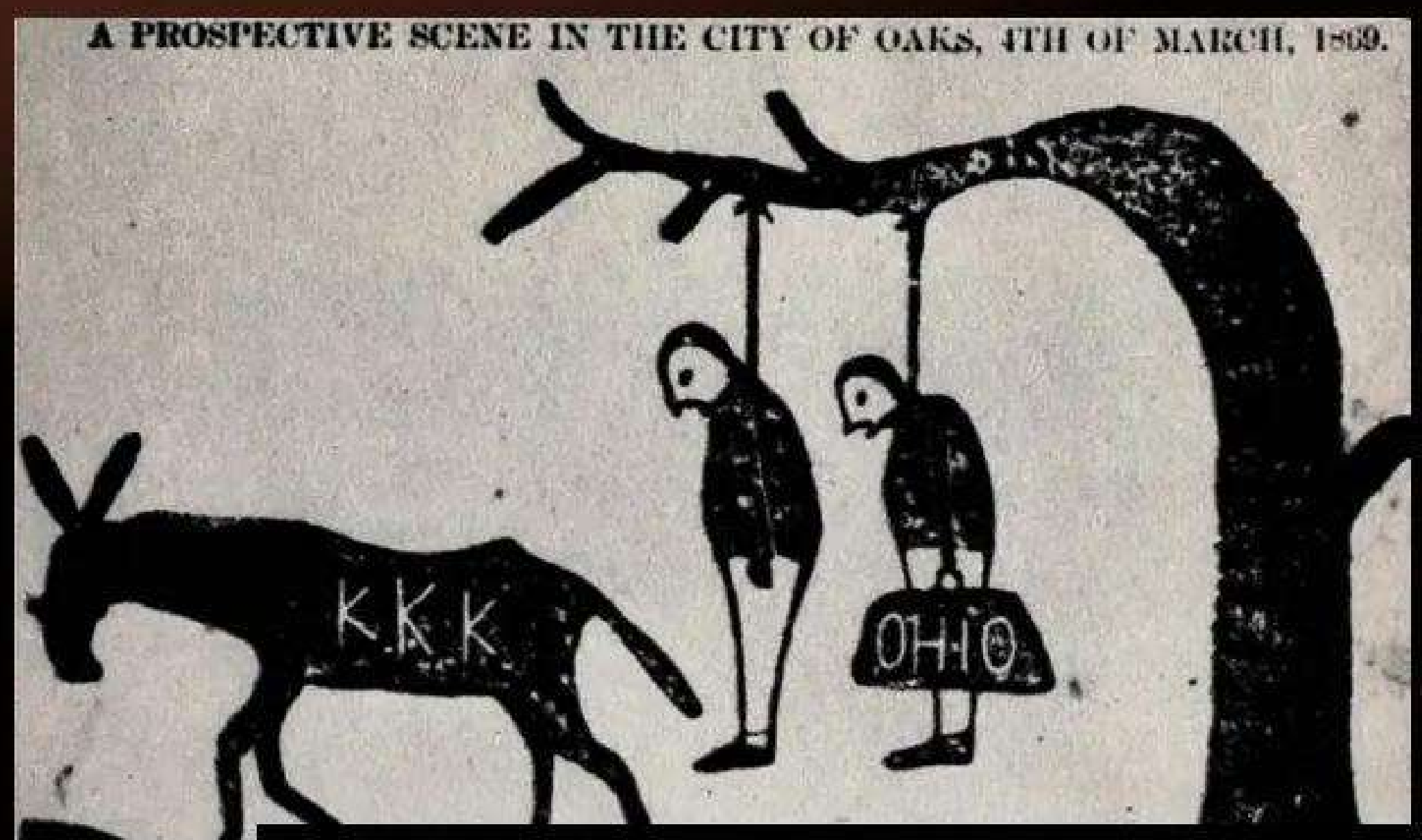
KKK Torture Methods

The Ku Klux Klan use extreme violence and intimidation; they have become notorious for lynching their victims

Since its earliest days, the Ku Klux Klan has employed violence and terror as a matter of routine. The Klan has targeted different groups with both psychological intimidation and sheer brute force.

Victims of Klan violence are frequently dragged out of their homes in darkness and subjected to prolonged violent assaults. Amongst the torture techniques used by the KKK are flogging, with victims subjected to hundreds of lashes with a whip or even a wooden paddle. In some cases in the past, people were tarred and feathered, meaning they were drenched in boiling tar before feathers were dumped onto them. It was an agonising and humiliating fate. Beatings were frequent and there have also been cases of branding with acid, as well as Klansmen burning their victim's body parts during torture. Sexual violence has been a common tactic used against women, and men have suffered castration at the hands of Klansmen.

Perhaps the most infamous method of violence employed by the Klan is lynching. Victims were often subjected to brutal beatings or tortured before being strung up from trees by a brutal, organised mob. In the past, some of these lynchings drew considerable crowds, who celebrated as their victims suffered.


A PROSPECTIVE SCENE IN THE CITY OF OAKS, 4TH OF MARCH, 1869.
K.K.K
OHIO

Lynchings and brutal violence were central to the Ku Klux Klan's reign of terror

Concerned Citizens of the Nov. 3rd Incident
MARCH FOR JUSTICE

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EVIL EXPERIMENTS

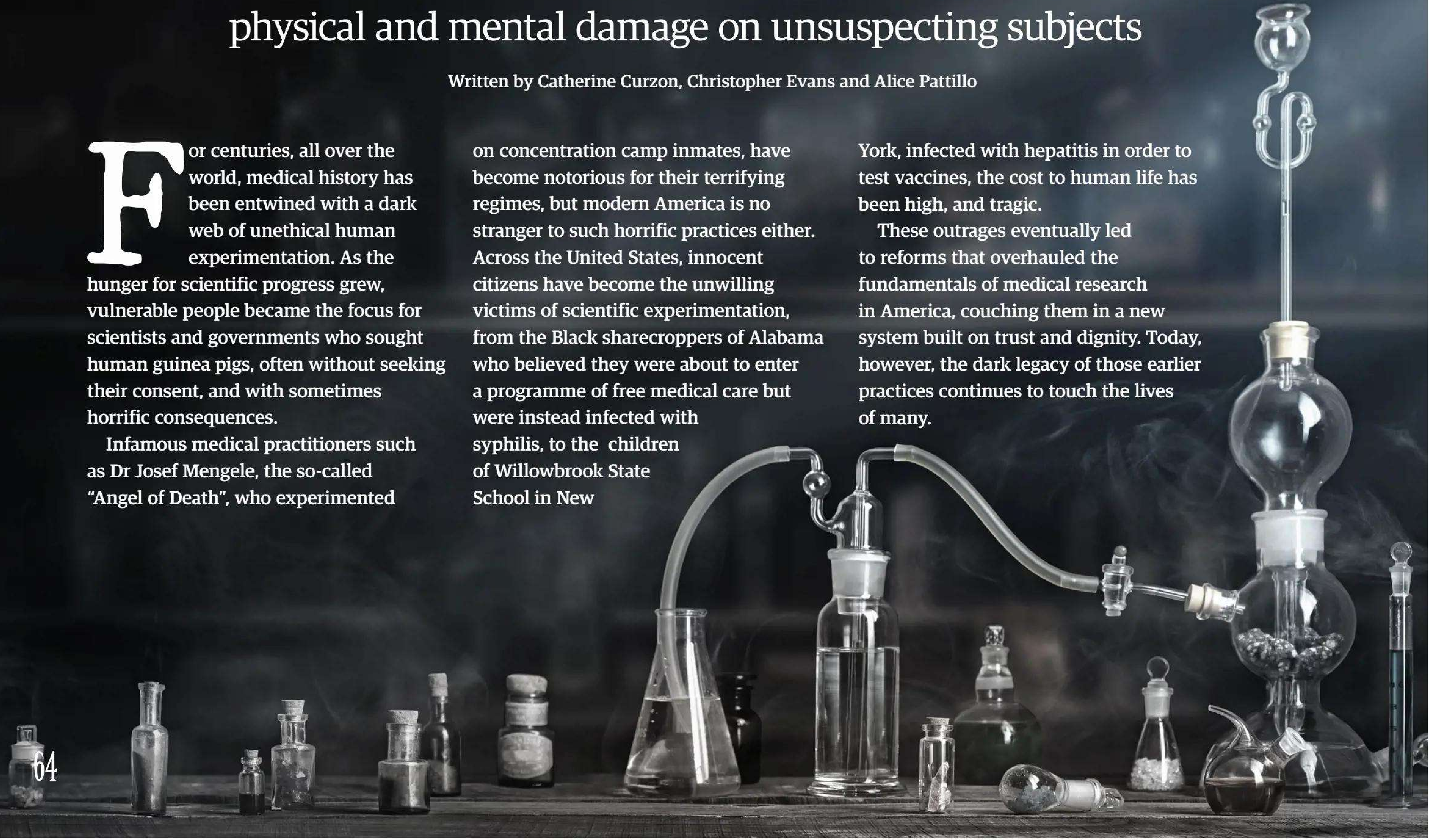
The land of the free has also been the land of terror, where unethical and often nonconsensual experiments have wreaked devastating physical and mental damage on unsuspecting subjects

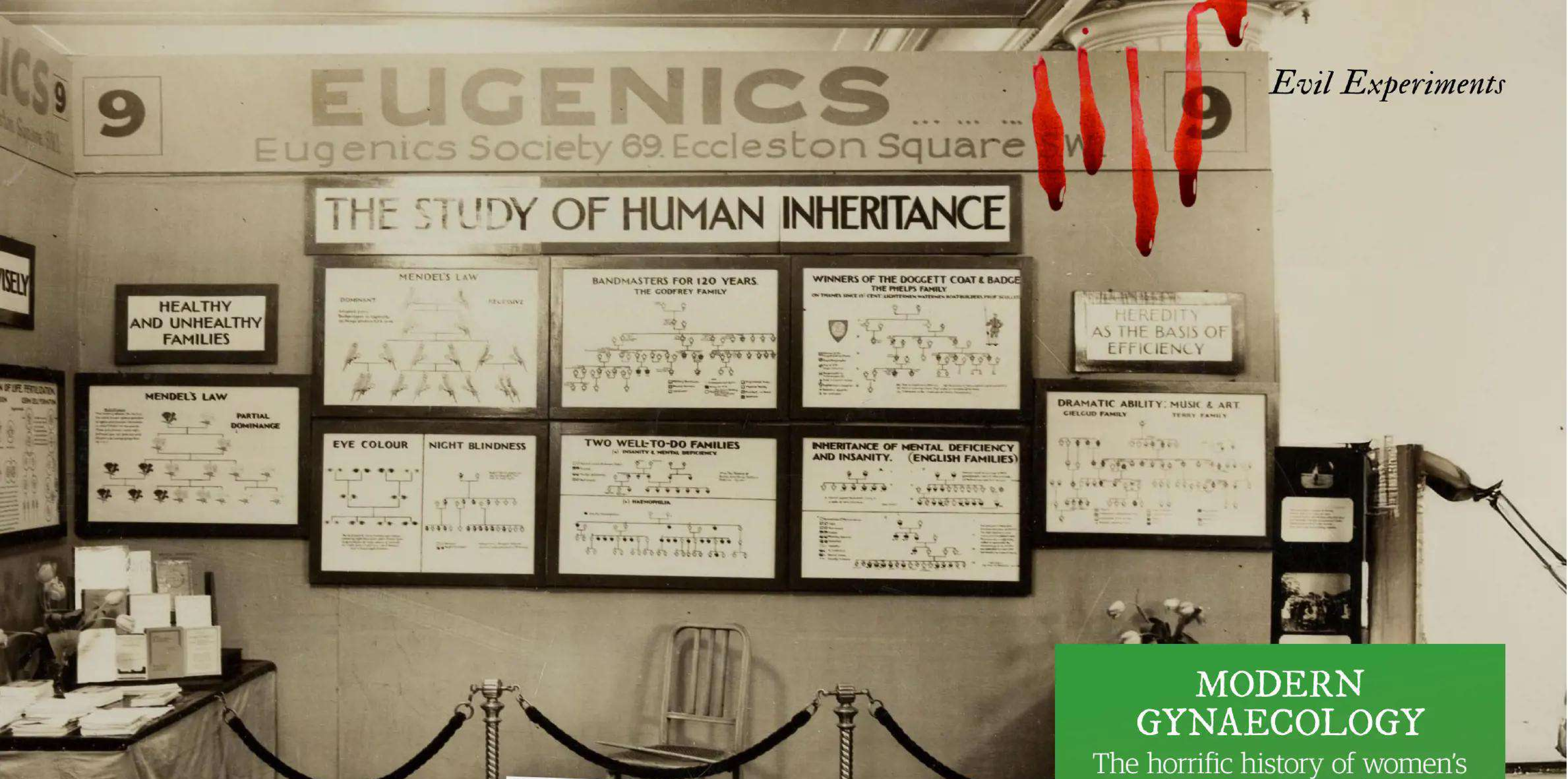
Written by Catherine Curzon, Christopher Evans and Alice Pattillo

For centuries, all over the world, medical history has been entwined with a dark web of unethical human experimentation. As the hunger for scientific progress grew, vulnerable people became the focus for scientists and governments who sought human guinea pigs, often without seeking their consent, and with sometimes horrific consequences.

Infamous medical practitioners such as Dr Josef Mengele, the so-called "Angel of Death", who experimented on concentration camp inmates, have become notorious for their terrifying regimes, but modern America is no stranger to such horrific practices either. Across the United States, innocent citizens have become the unwilling victims of scientific experimentation, from the Black sharecroppers of Alabama who believed they were about to enter a programme of free medical care but were instead infected with syphilis, to the children of Willowbrook State School in New York, infected with hepatitis in order to test vaccines, the cost to human life has been high, and tragic.

These outrages eventually led to reforms that overhauled the fundamentals of medical research in America, couching them in a new system built on trust and dignity. Today, however, the dark legacy of those earlier practices continues to touch the lives of many.




EUGENICS
Eugenics Society 69. Eccleston Square
THE STUDY OF HUMAN INHERITANCE
HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY FAMILIES
MENDEL'S LAW
BANDMASTERS FOR 120 YEARS. THE GODFREY FAMILY
WINNERS OF THE DOGGETT COAT & BADGE THE PHELPS FAMILY
HEREDITY AS THE BASIS OF EFFICIENCY
MENDEL'S LAW PARTIAL DOMINANCE
EYE COLOUR
NIGHT BLINDNESS
TWO WELL-TO-DO FAMILIES
INHERITANCE OF MENTAL DEFICIENCY AND INSANITY. (ENGLISH FAMILIES)
DRAMATIC ABILITY: MUSIC & ART

> *"American research even inspired Adolf Hitler to lionise the practice in Mein Kampf"*

Physical Culture
JUNE
15¢
Bernarr Macfadden
"Misunderstanding" Is This True Marriage Story Your Own Case?
Sorry I've Been a "Good Boy"? A New Basis of Conduct
The Valves of Your Heart
Shall We Breed or Sterilize Defectives?
ALBERT EDWARD WIGGAM

EUGENICS

Making "better" humans through selection

Reviled for today for its association with the Nazis, eugenics is a pseudoscience that seeks to improve a population's gene pool by selectively breeding only from subjects deemed fit, whilst actively preventing reproduction in those considered "unfit", usually certain ethnic groups, the poor, and the disabled.

"Eugenics" was first coined in 1883 by Sir Francis Galton, half-cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton believed that future societies could be shaped by encouraging and incentivising reproduction amongst people "hereditarily endowed with noble qualities". He encouraged a scoring system to decide suitability and suggested financially rewarding families of high status who married and reproduced.

Interest in eugenics peaked during the early 20th century and it enjoyed particular engagement during the Progressive Era of the United States, where it played a part in immigration policy, as well as laws regarding miscegenation and reproduction. Notable supporters of the movement included 26th US president Theodore Roosevelt, scientist Alexander Graham Bell, industrialist John D Rockefeller Jr. and cornflakes inventor Dr John Harvey Kellogg – all of whom openly advocated for and funded eugenics research.

Eugenics laws were further legitimised by the Buck versus Bell case of 1927, in which the US Supreme Court upheld forced sterilisation policy. American research even inspired Adolf Hitler to lionise the practice in *Mein Kampf* and early Nazi legislation was built on US research, with senior German officials taking advice from American scientists on eugenics policies.

World War II effectively put a stop to popular research and practice based on eugenics, due to its association with Nazi atrocities. Despite this, coerced sterilisations continued to take place in America as late as the 1970s, particularly in women from poor backgrounds and ethnic groups including Native Americans and women of colour.

MODERN GYNAECOLOGY

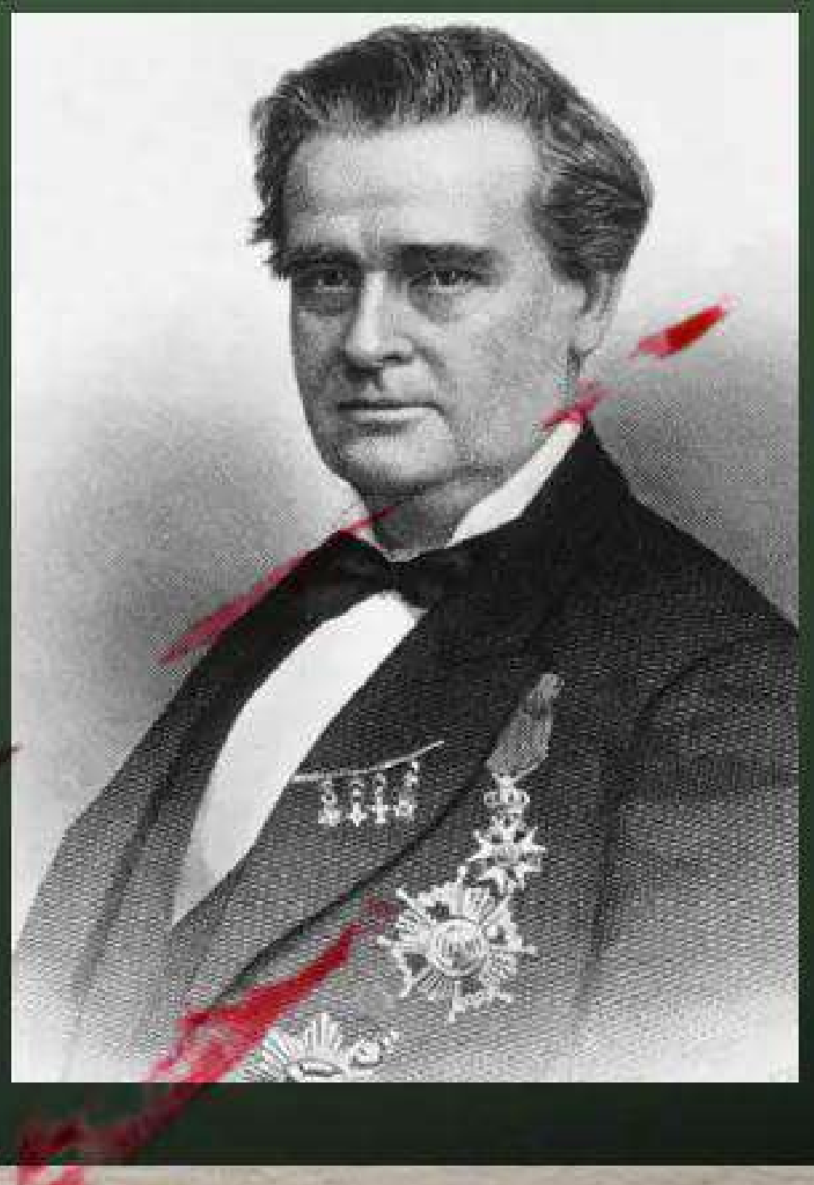
The horrific history of women's healthcare revealed

The birth of modern gynaecology can be traced back to Alabama's J Marion Sims, known to some as "father of modern gynaecology". Sims pioneered surgical techniques in the 1840s, some of which are still used today, and developed surgical instruments for use specifically in gynaecological surgeries.

However, Sims' experimental procedures on vesicovaginal fistulas were carried out not on consenting subjects, but on unanaesthetised enslaved Black women. Little is known of these women other than the names of three of them: Anarcha Westcott, Betsey ,and Lucy, all of whom endured dozens of agonising operations. Although his work was pioneering, Sims made his medical advances at an unfathomable cost; Westcott was forced to undergo more than two dozen operations without anaesthesia and today, she has been recognised as the "mother of modern gynaecology".

In more recent times, Sims has been at the centre of debates around medical ethics. During his lifetime, he defended his work as necessary and claimed that the enslaved Black women upon whom he operated had been willing patients, who needed treatment and could not receive it elsewhere.

Furthermore, Sims, and many of his contemporaries, believed that Black people felt less pain – a myth manufactured by doctors and used by slave owners to justify the gruelling physical labour and abuse that African Americans were subjected to. Unfortunately, not only did this result in Sims' patients and other people of colour being denied sedation and pain relief at the time, it's a bias that has continued through to the present day. Despite being the unconsenting guinea pigs of gynaecology, women of colour still face significantly higher maternal mortality rates thanks to both medical misogyny (notably the belief that women overreact to pain) and pervasive medical racism – resulting in their reported pain being minimised and complications attended to too late.



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THE INTERSEX "IDEAL EXPERIMENT"

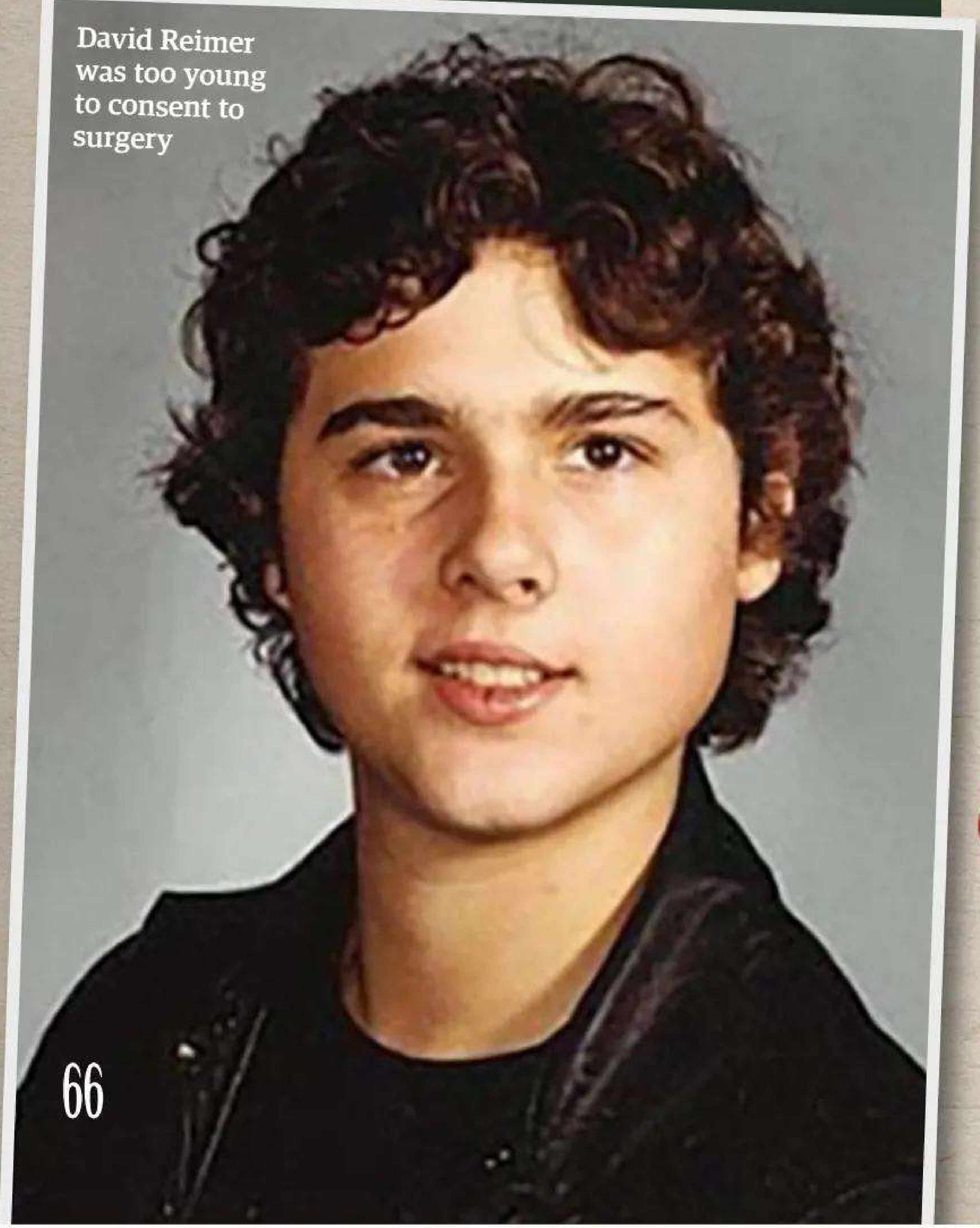
The unwilling subject of gender identity research

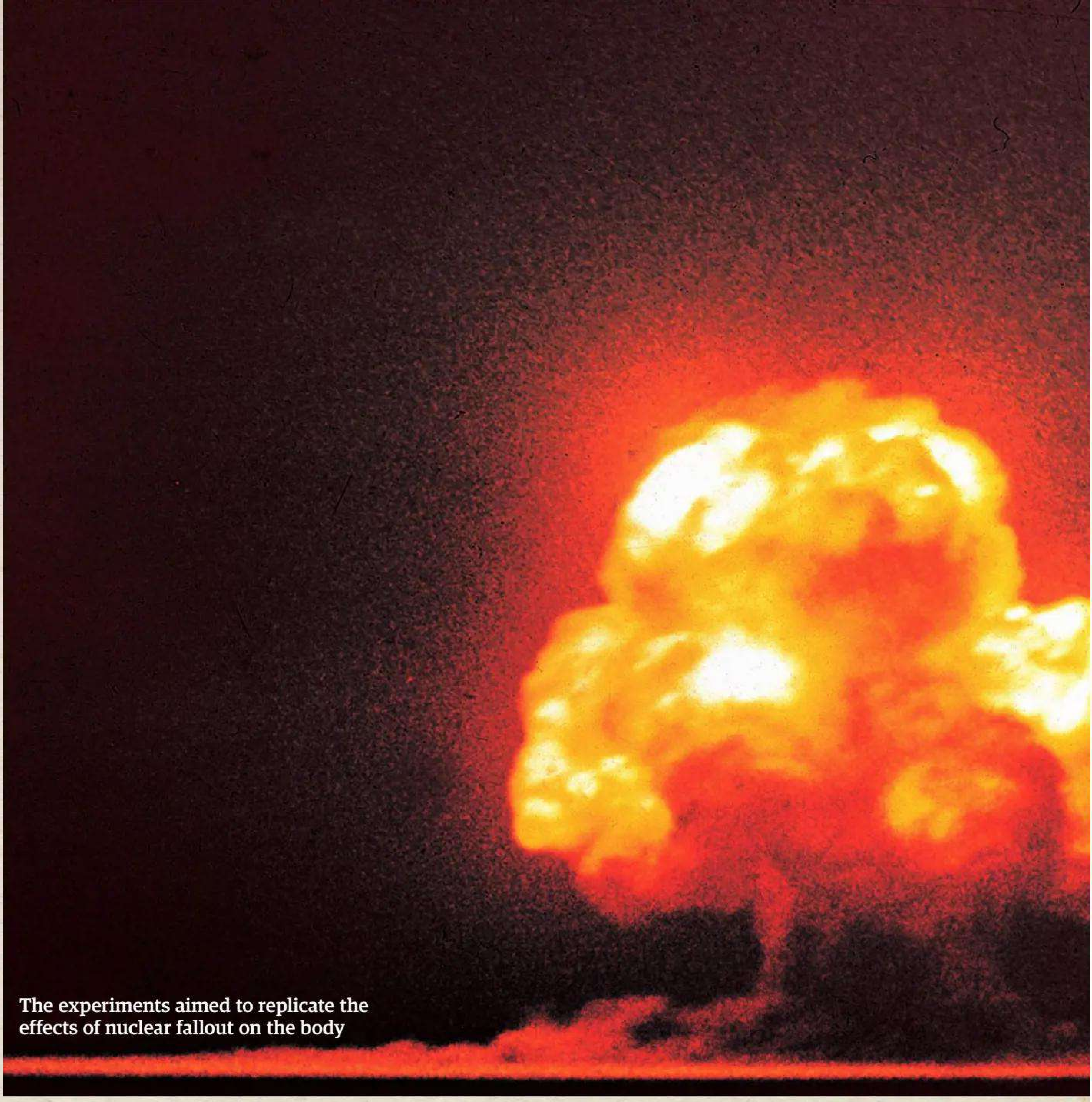
n the mid-20th century, psychologist John Money was researching the theory of optimal gender at Johns Hopkins University, asserting that gender identity was not decided by biology, but could be shaped through socialisation. His most famous experiment was known as the "John/Joan case" and was centred around David Reimer, whose penis was destroyed during a circumcision in 1965. Money recommended gender reassignment and the child was raised as Brenda.

As Reimer grew older he was subjected to intense interest from Money, who trained him in what were supposed to be female sexual practices, encouraging Reimer to act out submissive sexual positions with his own twin brother. He was placed on a programme of female hormones during adolescence in order to ensure he developed breasts and, according to Money, was entirely female as a result of his work. Money achieved worldwide fame as a result of what had apparently been a completely successful experiment.

Money's work influenced procedures regarding intersex people and protocols for dealing with such cases for decades. Known as the John Hopkins protocol, it resulted in thousands of doctors all over the globe choosing a binary gender for intersex babies and performing immediate, non-consensual and unnecessary genitourinary surgeries. In fact, the reality was very different and Reimer confessed to his father that he had always felt like a boy, no matter what Money believed. Suffering psychological torment, Reimer had rejected his female assignment by age nine and later had a second surgery to transition himself back to male, before taking his own life in 2004.

In 1997, sexologist Milton Diamond exposed the reality of the experiment, leading to the protocols being questioned. By the early 2000s, recommendations for immediate cosmetic gender assignment surgeries on infants began to dwindle and by 2006 it was discouraged entirely. However, cosmetic surgeries on intersex infants still occur today and while many countries have banned the practice, there are currently no federal bands in the United States.


David Reimer was too young to consent to surgery

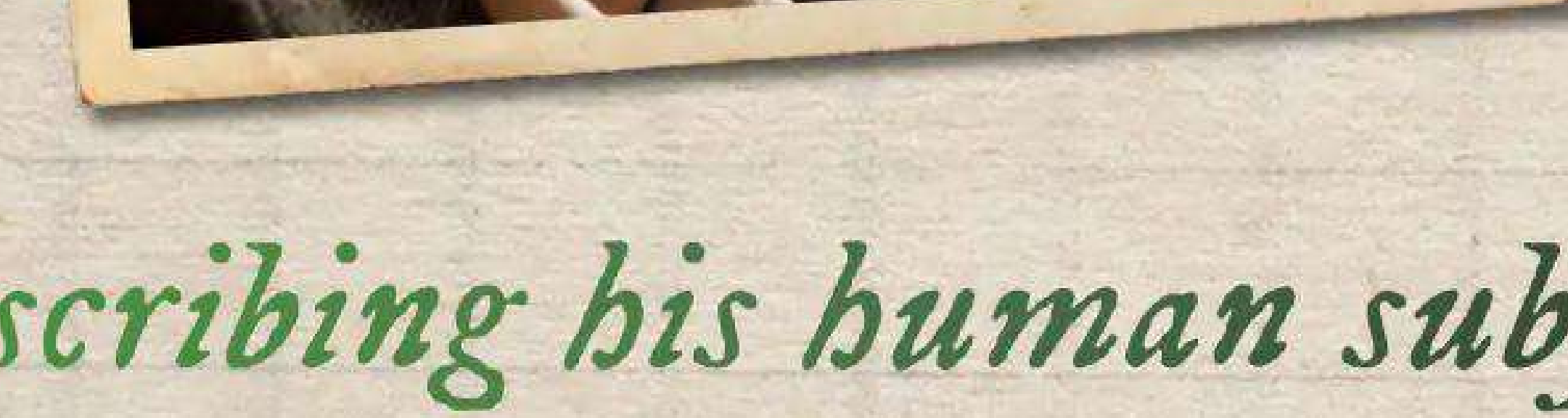

The experiments aimed to replicate the effects of nuclear fallout on the body

THE HOLMESBURG PROGRAM

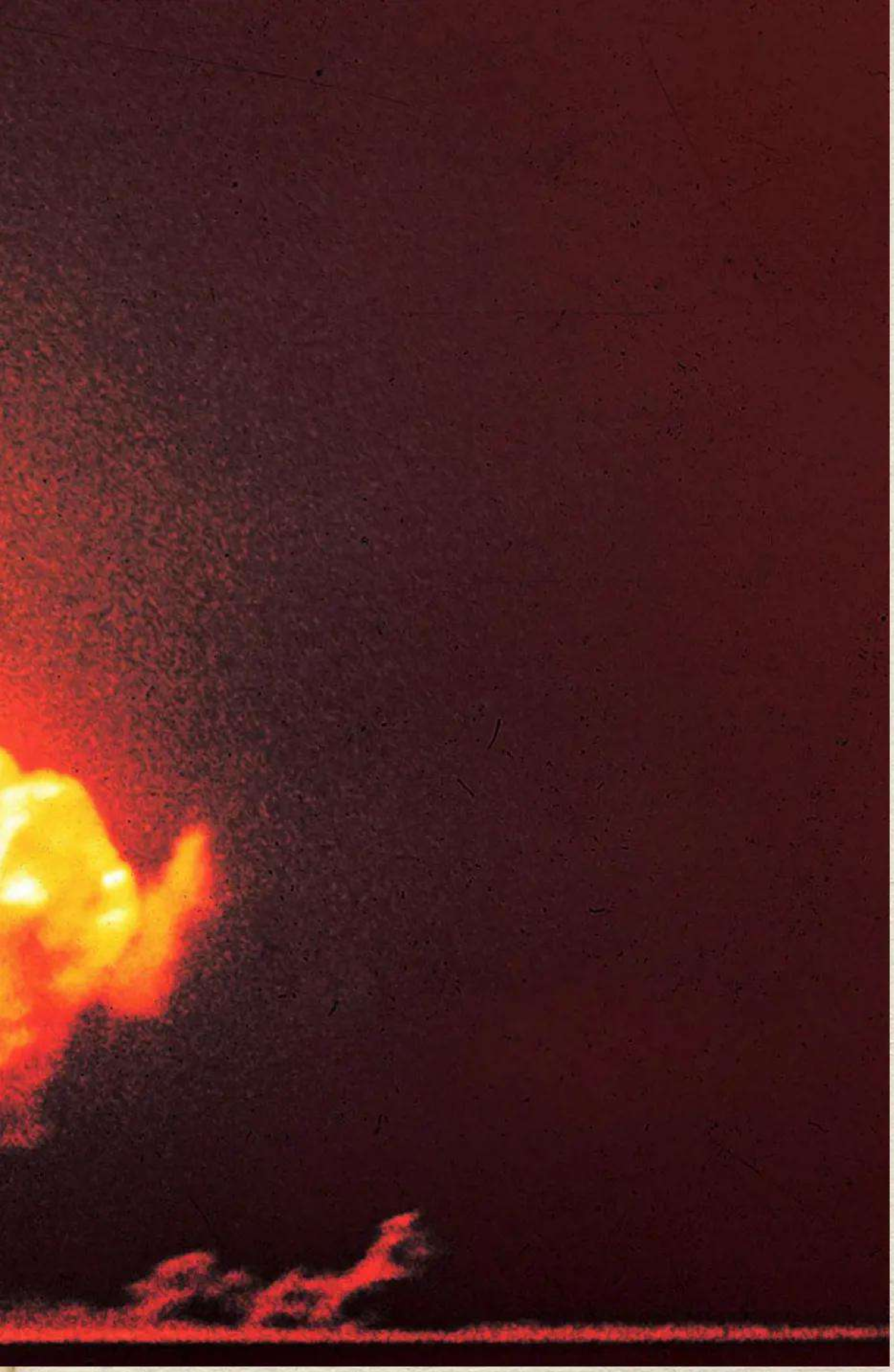
Prisoners were paid a pittance to test lethal substances

Few experiments have become as notorious as the Holmesburg Program, which ran from 1951 to 1974 and involved inmates at Holmesburg Prison in Philadelphia, who were experimented on by University of Pennsylvania dermatologist Dr Albert Kligman. Many of these men were poor Black inmates and virtually none were able to give informed consent.

Describing his human subjects as "acres of skin", Kligman used the inmates as human test subjects for everything from cosmetics to skin lotions and pharmaceuticals for companies as famous as Johnson & Johnson. He exposed prisoners to radiation, narcotics, and pathogens for groups including corporate entities and the US Army, with Kligman's most controversial experiment coming when he applied dioxin to the naked skin of inmates to study its effects. Dioxin is a highly toxic component used in Agent Orange and for less than $1 a day, unwitting inmates were paid to allow the doctor to work on them. Many suffered serious and painful dermatological trauma and some eventually suffered from devastating long-term effects including organ damage and cancer.


Black prisoners suffered horribly

"Describing his human subjects as 'acres of skin', Kligman used the inmates as human test subjects"



HUMAN RADIATION EXPERIMENTS

The unwitting victims of radioactive research

For 30 years, from the 1940s to the 1970s, human radiation experiments were a vital part of Cold War research. The unwilling subjects of this research were often the most vulnerable people, including the terminally ill, the poor, and children.

Walter E Fernald State School in Massachusetts was a facility for children with intellectual disabilities, previously known as Massachusetts School for the Feeble-Minded and renamed in honour of its former superintendent Walter E Fernald, a key figure in the eugenics movement. Between 1946 and 1953 researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with the involvement of peers from Harvard and even Quaker Oats, conducted experiments on its pupils. Members of the school's science club were fed oatmeal that had been adulterated with radioactive tracers, or were injected with radioactive calcium, in order to study nutrient absorption. Club members were rewarded with outings to sports games and other gifts and though the doses they were given were usually low, their parents were not informed of the true nature of the experiment.

Further radiation experiments took place at Cincinnati General Hospital, where at least 90 cancer patients received high doses of radiation that simulated the effects of a nuclear bomb. In research partly funded partly by the Defense Atomic Support Agency, the subjects suffered traumatic side effects without ever being fully informed of what they were consenting to, if their consent was sought at all. The programme ran for more than a decade from 1960 to 1971, ending only after unfavourable press coverage led to a public outcry.

San Franciscans were exposed to bacterial pathogens that the Navy claimed were safe

GERM WARFARE TESTING

Populations were secretly exposed to bacteria and chemicals

For two decades between 1949 and 1969, US military and intelligence agencies conducted at least 239 secret germ warfare tests on the American public. These tests were part of the Cold War programme and were aimed at simulating how biological agents might be expected to spread through real urban communities. Although the materials used for the simulations were believed to be harmless at the time, more recently they have been at the centre of debate regarding the harm they might cause.

One of the most famous of these programmes was Operation Sea-Spray in 1950, when a US Navy ship stationed off the coast of San Francisco spent six days spraying the bacteria pathogens Serratia marcescens and Bacillus globigii over the city. As the bacteria spread, multiple residents developed rare urinary tract infections and one man, Edward Nevin, died as a result of his condition. Despite this, the US military continued to maintain that the bacteria they used were harmless.

Three years later, Operation Top Hat was held at Fort McClellan in Alabama. During this procedure, members of the US Army Chemical Corps were deliberately exposed to chemical and biological agents including mustard gas without informed consent. These experiments were intended to test the effectiveness of decontamination methods and were carried out due to a loophole that allowed the military to claim the tests were simply part of the line of duty.

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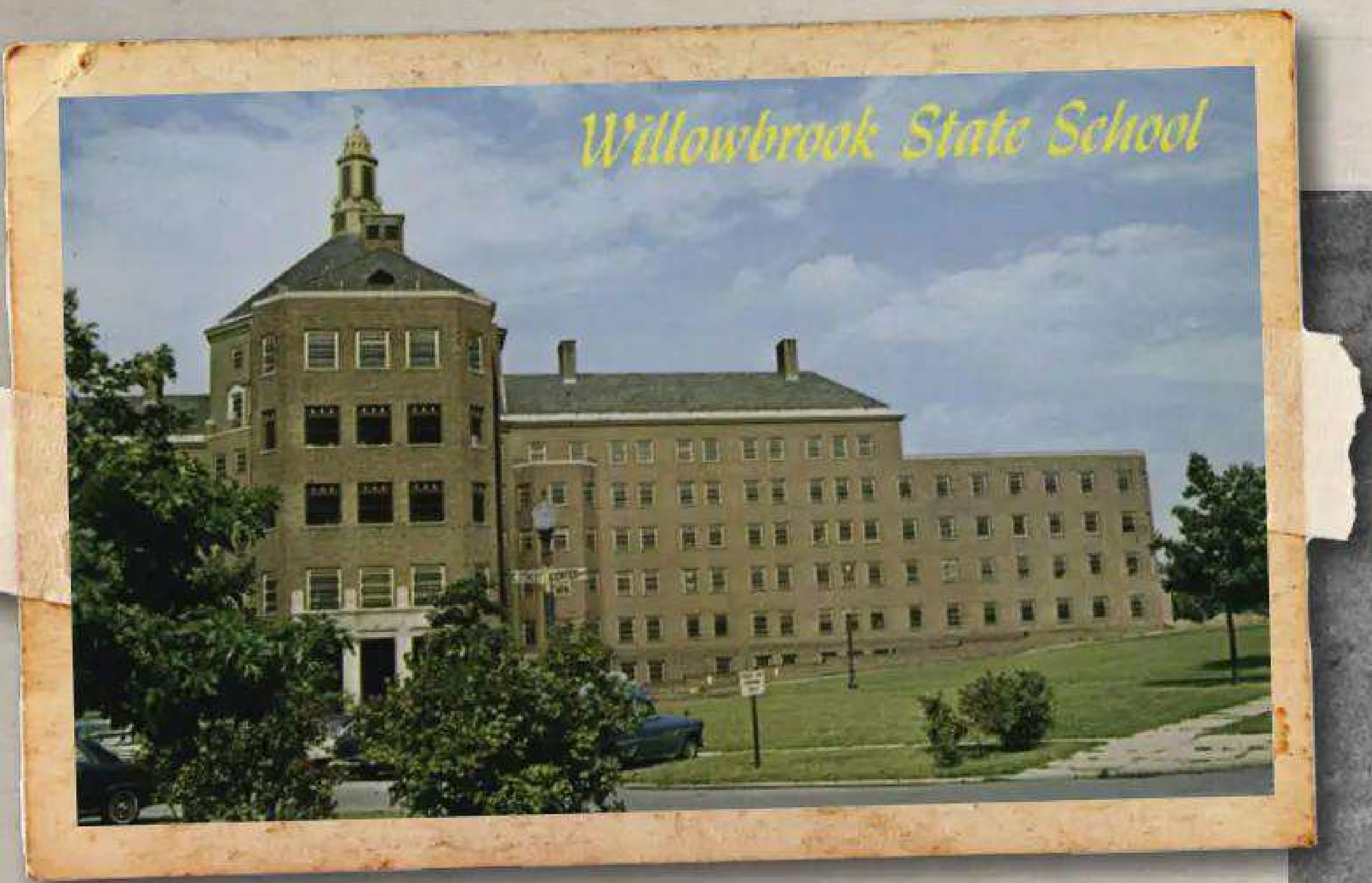
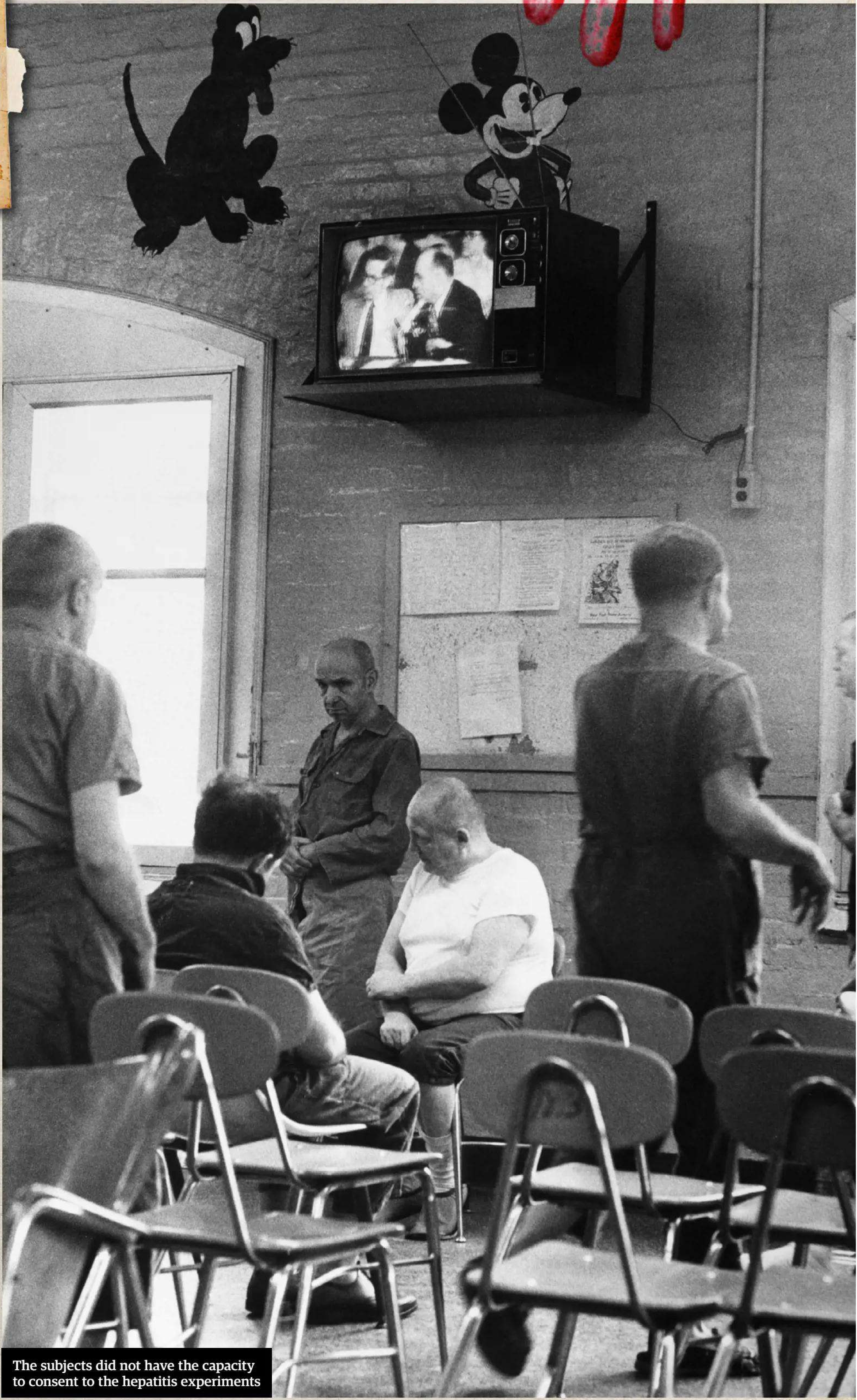


WILLOWBROOK HEPATITIS EXPERIMENTS

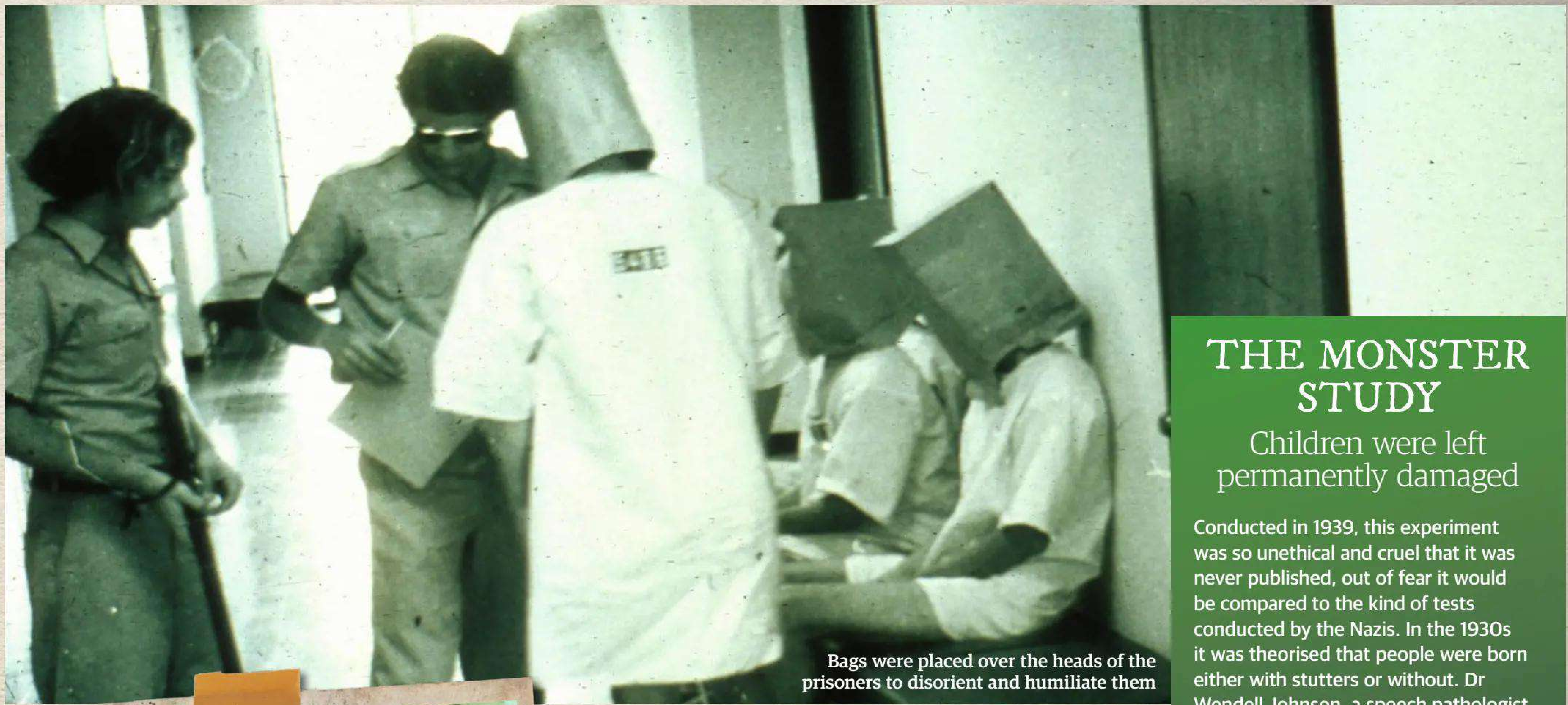
An epidemic allowed to run riot

Willowbrook State School in Staten Island, New York was once the biggest state-run institution for children and adults with intellectual disabilities in the US. From its opening in 1947, the school was overpopulated and living conditions were unsanitary, leading to repeated outbreaks of hepatitis. Rather than cleaning up, medical researchers utilised the virus-ridden institution to carry out a series of studies on the infectious disease. Between 1956 and 1971, New York University's Saul Krugman and Yale's Robert W. McCollum used the children of Willowbrook to better understand hepatitis, how it could be prevented – specifically the effectiveness of gamma globulin injections – and the types of viruses that caused it. One of Krugman's studies involved feeding stool samples from children infected with live hepatitis virus to other healthy children. Despite the horrific nature of the study, the experiments resulted in the identification of two hepatitis strains (A and B) and laid the foundation for the development of a vaccine.

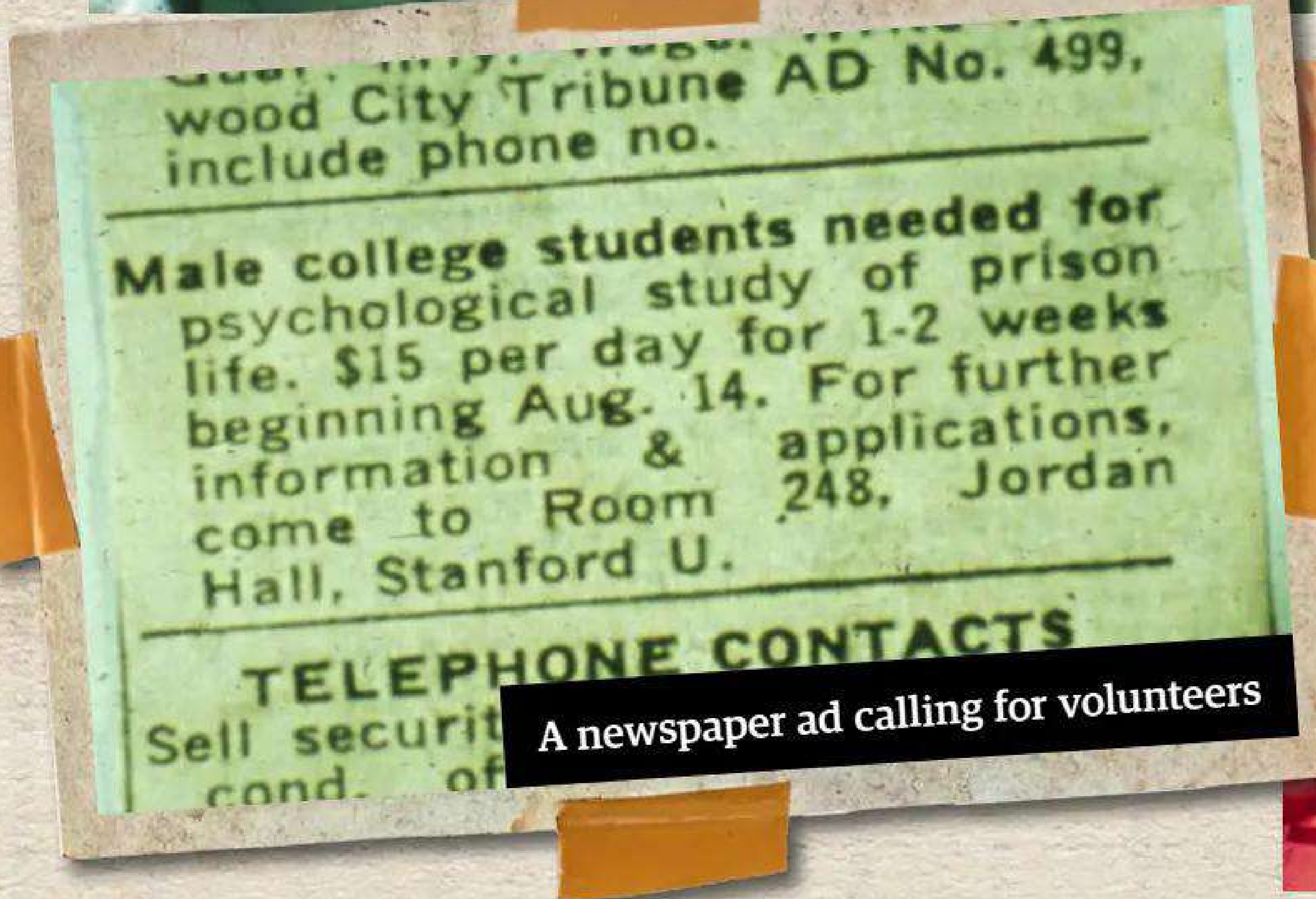
While Krugman argued that the subjects would have been exposed to hepatitis at the institution anyway and they would benefit from immunity thanks to the exposure, parents reported being forced to consent or have admission denied and the trials are widely regarded as one of the most severe breaches of medical research ethics in US history. After years of criticism, the hepatitis isolation unit was closed in January 1972. This coincided with journalist Geraldo Rivera's exposé of the facility's overcrowding, filthy living conditions and abuse, which resulted in a class-action lawsuit filed on behalf of 5,000 residents. The case spurred a national movement towards community-based care and deinstitutionalisation. Meanwhile, the questions raised over the ethics of the experiments themselves helped to reshape modern medical research standards regarding vulnerable populations and consent.



The subjects did not have the capacity to consent to the hepatitis experiments



Bags were placed over the heads of the prisoners to disorient and humiliate them

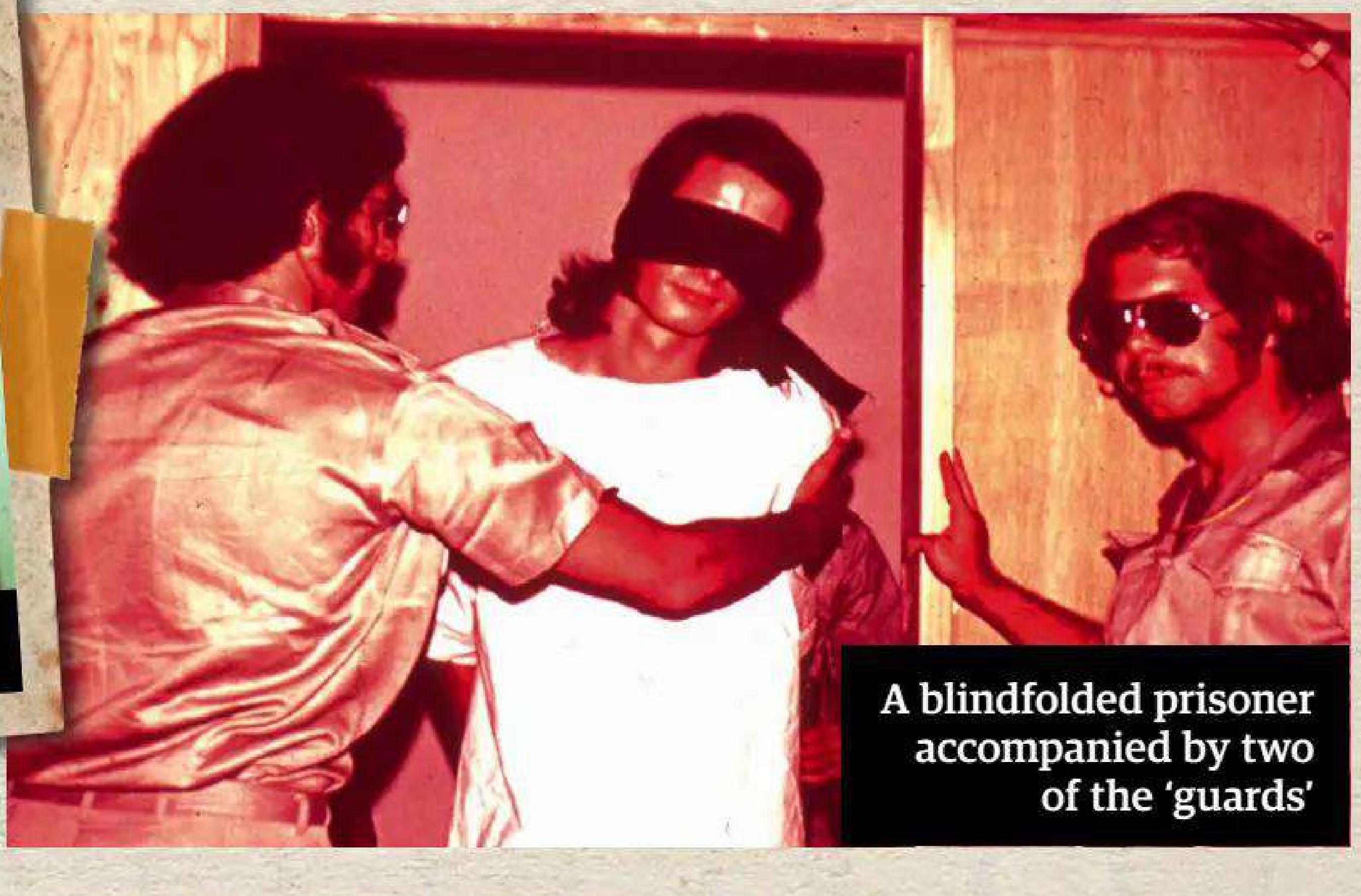


wood City Tribune AD No. 499,
include phone no.

Male college students needed for
psychological study of prison
life. $15 per day for 1-2 weeks
beginning Aug. 14. For further
information & applications,
come to Room 248, Jordan
Hall, Stanford U.

TELEPHONE CONTACTS
Sell securit
cond. of

A newspaper ad calling for volunteers



A blindfolded prisoner accompanied by two of the 'guards'

THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT

The behavioural study that went too far, too fast

Taking place in 1971 at Stanford University and due to last two weeks, this experiment was terminated after only six days. 24 male students were chosen to roleplay as either prisoners or guards in an experiment led by psychology professor Philip Zimbardo, designed to examine the effect it would have on human behaviour. The prisoners were 'arrested' at home and brought to the prison, where they were made to wear dresses and a chain around their ankle. Very quickly the subjects' behaviour escalated. Prisoners rebelled and barricaded themselves in their cells, they turned on each other and told the guards if another prisoner broke the rules. Guards became aggressive and tyrannical, subjecting the inmates to such mistreatment and abuse dished out as punishment that some of them suffered mental breakdowns and had to be released. Zimbardo's girlfriend, who had just finished her own studies at the university, came to observe his experiment and was horrified by what she saw. Her alarm caused Zimbardo, who himself had sunk into his role as 'prison superintendent', to re-evaluate the situation and bring it to a swift end.

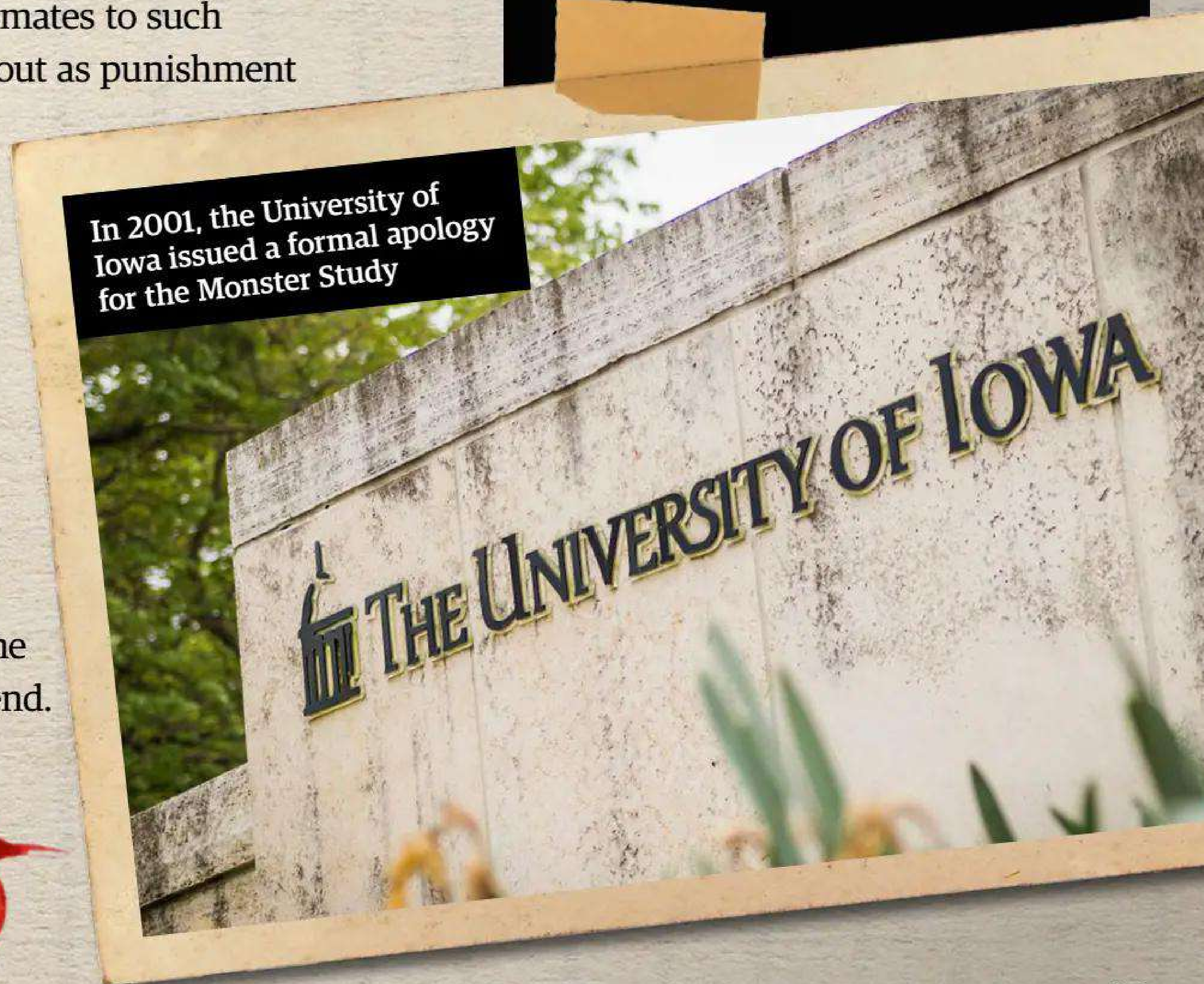
> *"Some of them suffered mental breakdowns and had to be released"*

THE MONSTER STUDY

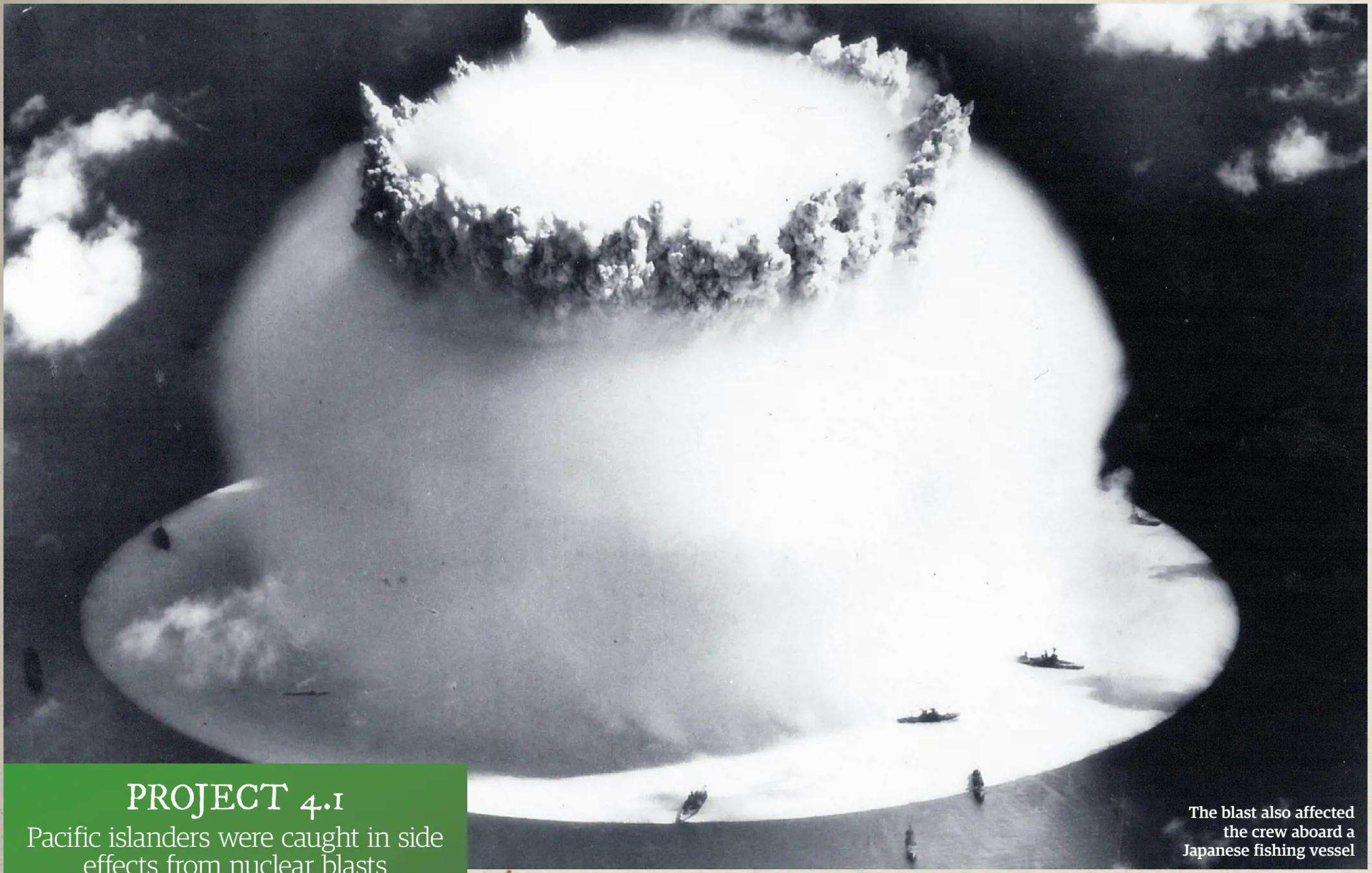
Children were left permanently damaged

Conducted in 1939, this experiment was so unethical and cruel that it was never published, out of fear it would be compared to the kind of tests conducted by the Nazis. In the 1930s it was theorised that people were born either with stutters or without. Dr Wendell Johnson, a speech pathologist working at the University of Iowa, was convinced that labelling children could impact the way they talked and even cause speech defects.

To prove his theory, Dr Johnson conducted 'the Monster Study'. 22 orphan children were chosen and split into two groups, both a mix of stutterers and non-stutterers. The first group were called 'normal speakers' and were told as such, and given plenty of support and positive feedback on their linguistic skills. The second group were told they were stutterers and warned not to speak unless they took great care to ensure their speech was perfect. The effects were dramatic – children who already had stutters grew worse, whilst some of those without developed them. The damage inflicted was permanent and in 2007, seven of the subjects won $1.2 million in damages after suing the state of Iowa.



In 2001, the University of Iowa issued a formal apology for the Monster Study



The blast also affected the crew aboard a Japanese fishing vessel

PROJECT 4.1

Pacific islanders were caught in side effects from nuclear blasts

Following World War II, the US government had taken control of the Marshall Islands, located in the north Pacific. The islands' populations had suffered under Japanese control in the war and welcomed this change. This turned out to be short-lived, however, when in 1946, the US forced the small population of Bikini Atoll from their homes so that they could use the area for nuclear testing. As the fallout drifted across the other inhabited islands, children would play in the 'snow' that fell from the sky.

The US made no attempt to warn or relocate the Marshallese in these areas. Instead they decided to observe the effects of radiation on humans, in what was to be known as Project 4.1.

The resulting radiation poisoning caused widespread sickness among the remaining populations and babies were born with severe deformations, some even without bones.

Decades after the testing, the islands' populations still suffer from cancers and other health effects. The psychological impact has resulted in high suicide rates. Thyroid cancer is common and affects the ability to sing, an important part of Marshallese culture.

CAUTION
RADIOACTIVE
MATERIAL

A radioactive coconut taken from Bikini Atoll beach, on the Marshall Islands

PROJECT MK-ULTRA

Testing drugs and psychological warfare

In 1953, in the midst of Cold War paranoia, the CIA started a covert programme to discover the secrets of mind control. Convinced the Soviet Union and China were already brainwashing US prisoners, the CIA approved Project MK-Ultra. These experiments explored the possibility of controlling humans to do the bidding of others by breaking down the mind using drugs and other psychological warfare, such as electroshocks and hypnosis. While some of the experiments appeared above board, with their subjects being volunteering students, many of the tests were inflicted on Americans who had no idea. The CIA would even slip their own staff doses of the hallucinogenic drug LSD and observe how it affected their work. One such employee, Dr Frank Olson, was spiked with LSD after voicing concerns over the CIA's use of his research in aerosol weapons. Shortly after he killed himself in suspicious circumstances.

Although many of MK-Ultra's documents were destroyed, the project was exposed in 1974. In the following congressional hearings, the CIA acknowledged its existence, but the details remain murky to this day.

President Ford apologises to the family of Dr Frank Olson, who committed suicide after being drugged with LSD by the CIA

> *"The CIA would even slip their own staff doses of the hallucinogenic drug LSD"*

A subject receiving 'treatment' during the Tuskegee experiment

TUSKEGEE SYPHILIS STUDY

Black men were targeted

In 1932, 600 Black men in Alabama were offered free healthcare to take part in a medical trial, organised by the US Public Health Service. Told they were being treated for 'bad blood', the men were actually being monitored so scientists could observe the effects of syphilis. At the time scientific racism was common and white doctors incorrectly believed Black people were more likely to get syphilis and that their bodies were affected differently.

Initially told the trial would last six months, the men were given placebos and X-rays, made to take toxic treatments such as mercury, and subjected to painful spinal taps. Left untreated, syphilis can result in blindness, organ failure, mental illness, and death. The men had no idea of the truth, and were left to be ravaged by the disease, also endangering the lives of their sexual partners. If the men died, their burial was paid for so that the researchers could perform autopsies on the bodies.

The trial extended for years beyond the initial six months, and even when penicillin started to be used to treat syphilis in the 1940s, the researchers argued that it was now too late and denied the men treatment that could save their lives.

In 1972 a whistleblower exposed the experiment and the public outrage forced it to finally come to an end.

SEPARATING SIBLINGS

A probe into nature versus nurture

Robert Shafran had just started college in New York when he noticed that staff and classmates would constantly greet him by a different name. When he met this other person he was shocked to find that Eddy Galland was his identical twin, separated at birth and adopted to different parents. It got stranger when a third brother, David Kellman, saw their story on television and realised he was their long-lost triplet. Their reunion turned to horror when they discovered that they had been guinea pigs in a legal but questionable medical experiment during the 1960s. Child psychologist Peter Neubauer separated twins and triplets via an adoption agency to study the effects of nature vs nurture, sending them to different families of varied socioeconomic status. After uncovering the truth, the triplets struggled with their mental health and Eddy sadly took his own life. The experiment's research was never released, but it is known that there are many other siblings who have no idea they were a part of it.

The triplet brothers only discovered their real identity through a chance encounter

Welcome to Atomic City

How Las Vegas boomed during the Cold War and taught America to love the nuclear bomb through cocktail parties and beauty pageants

Written by Dominic Green

“What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas,” as the saying goes. Today, America’s ‘Sin City’ is a year-round adult playground resort in the Nevada desert, known for gambling, shotgun weddings and hedonism.

But, in the 1950s, while the Mafia were building the city’s hotels and casinos and stars like Sinatra were headlining its nightclubs, the neon lights of the Las Vegas Strip were eclipsed by another crowd-puller: the detonation flash and mushroom clouds of the atomic bomb.

At dawn on 27 January 1951, a US Air Force B-50 bomber dropped a nuclear warhead from 6,096 metres above Frenchman Flats – only 104 kilometres northwest of the Strip. President Harry Truman had ordered the conversion of an 800,000-acre Air Force bombing range in the barren Nevada Desert into the Nevada Proving Grounds, the heart of the United States’ Cold War nuclear programme.

The location was perfect for testing nuclear devices – the desert setting was predictable, with clear skies, low humidity and a low civilian population. Over the next four decades, until the the end of the Cold War, the Department of Energy would test 928 nuclear devices at the site.

That first warhead, codenamed Able, was more powerful than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. When Able exploded 323 metres in the air above the desert floor, it emitted a blinding flash of light. The ground shook and the detonation echoed through the mountains. The distinctive mushroom cloud took shape as the heat and radiation erupted outwards, almost in slow motion, showering the surrounding area with poisonous radiation.

Technicians registered and recorded the shock waves and the radioactive fallout as they tested the bomb’s destructive potential on animals, cars, trees, houses and shop window mannequins from JCPenney. Reporters, photographers, government visitors and local dignitaries were allowed to watch from News Nob, a hill on the test site, but the flash was so bright that it could be seen 643 kilometres away in San Francisco.

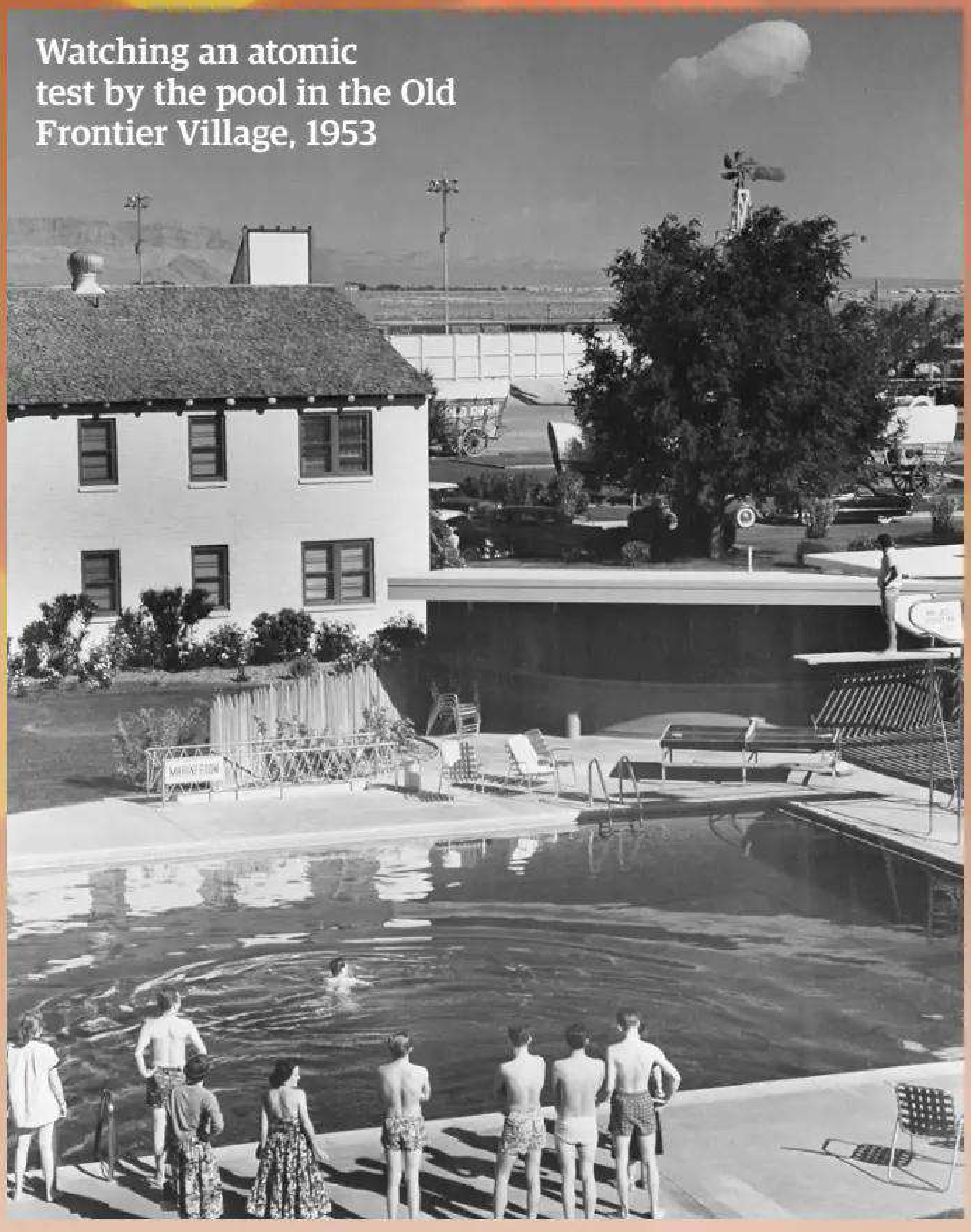
Meanwhile in Las Vegas, residents were driving to the edge of the city and having picnics as they watched the mushroom cloud spread across the sky. Tourists clambered onto the diving board of hotel swimming pools to get a better view. Dubbed ‘Atomic City, USA’, the bomb was one of Vegas’ most unique and unusual attractions.

The post-war years were, according to English poet Jeff Nuttall, the years of ‘Bomb Culture’.

ROYAL
NEVADA
WELCOME
ATOMIC SOLDIERS
DESERT RO

The flash of the 1951 Nevada bomb detonation was so bright that it could be seen 643 kilometres away in San Franciso

A Las Vegas casino gives soldiers from the nearby nuclear test site the VIP treatment in 1954


Watching an atomic test by the pool in the Old Frontier Village, 1953

Entertainer Dean Martin acting as a dealer at a Las Vegas casino

Rather than ending conflict forever, World War II had demonstrated that mankind had finally contrived a method for its total annihilation

Americans knew what damage nuclear blasts and radiation could do – they had seen the pictures of the devastation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. They feared that the 'Red Menace' of the Soviet Union, with whom they were now engaged in an atomic arms race, would nuke their cities. Schoolchildren were trained in emergency drills in case of a nuclear attack.

"This was the height of the Cold War and the 'Duck and Cover' drills," recalls local historian Dennis McBride, whose mother worked at the test site. "It's so hard to even articulate, being instilled with the sense that at any moment your life could come to a horribly frightening, bloody end."

You might think citizens would have protested about the rain of atomic fallout on their homes but Las Vegas was not like other places. People didn't only move there to work as waiters, croupiers and pool attendants; they came because of the military and scientific jobs that it created.

Gene Nelson performs the 'Atom Antic' near the test site

"The best thing to happen to Vegas was the Bomb," casino owner Benny Binion claimed in the 1970s. Between 1950 and 1960, the city's population doubled from 40,000 to 80,000, and then doubled again in the 1970s. From the start, federal funds powered the city's expansion.

The military personnel and civilian nuclear technicians who settled inside the test site itself at Mercury, Nevada, became a significant presence in the area's year-round population and contributed to the state's economy. Over the course of the Cold War, about 125,000 people held jobs at the site.

In its radioactive heyday, Mercury had a military barracks, a bowling alley, a cinema and even a swimming pool, but the desert around the town is still pockmarked with craters from atomic detonations. One of them, the Sedan crater, is the largest man-made hole in the United States at nearly 396 metres wide and 97 metres deep. Part of a test into the use of nuclear bombs for mining, it was created when a 104-kiloton detonation displaced 12 million tons of earth and rock.

One of the few objections to the testing programme came from Howard Hughes. The germaphobic, eccentric millionaire was worried about radiation contaminating the water supply. However, the Department of Energy insisted that there was no danger and the people of Las Vegas were advised to take a shower if they had been directly exposed to any fallout. They were also issued with military dog tags, just in case any accidents occurred.

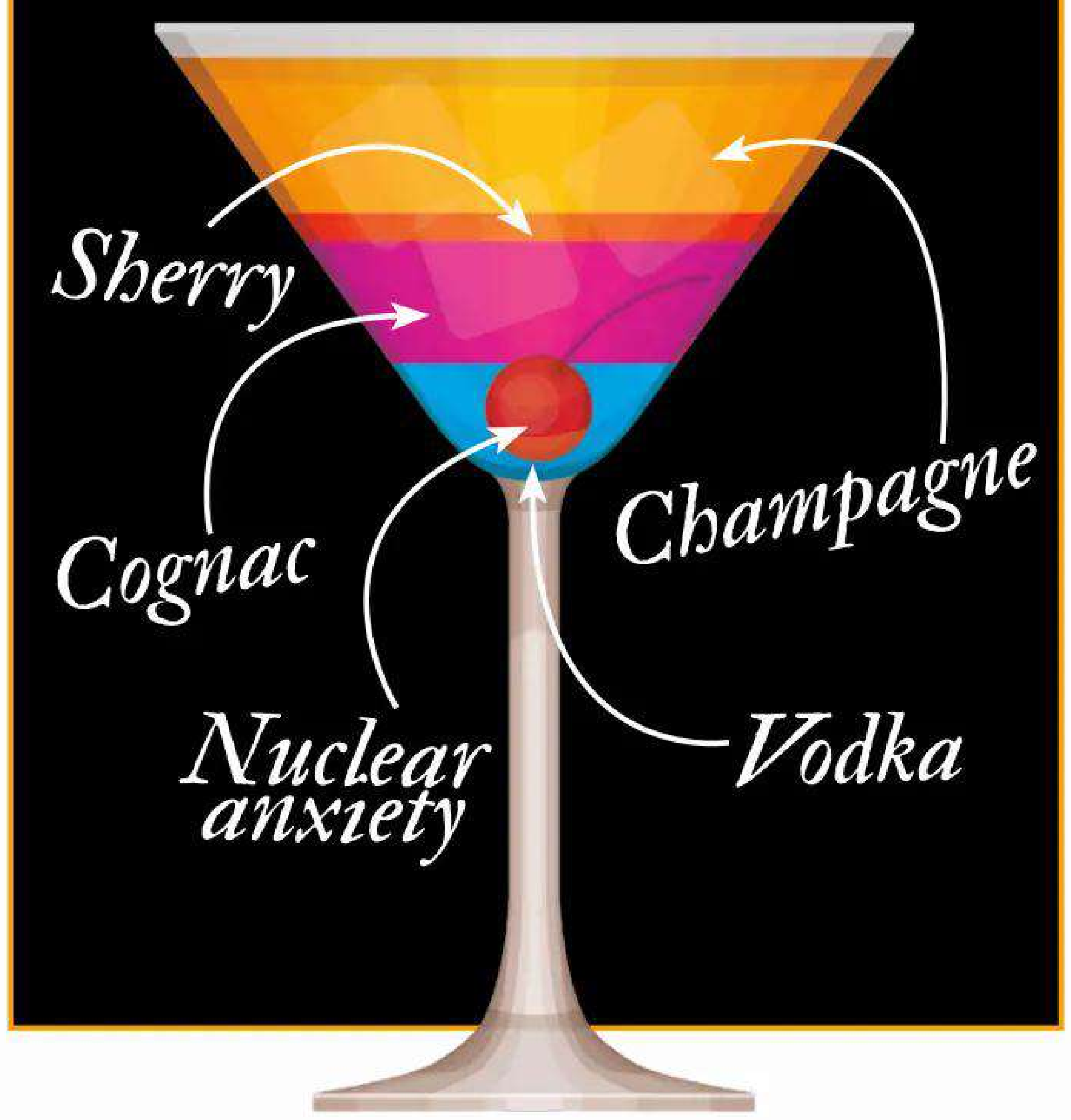
Rather than protesting, the city incorporated the weapon into its leisure industry. The first test in 1951 was marked by a parade with a float adorned

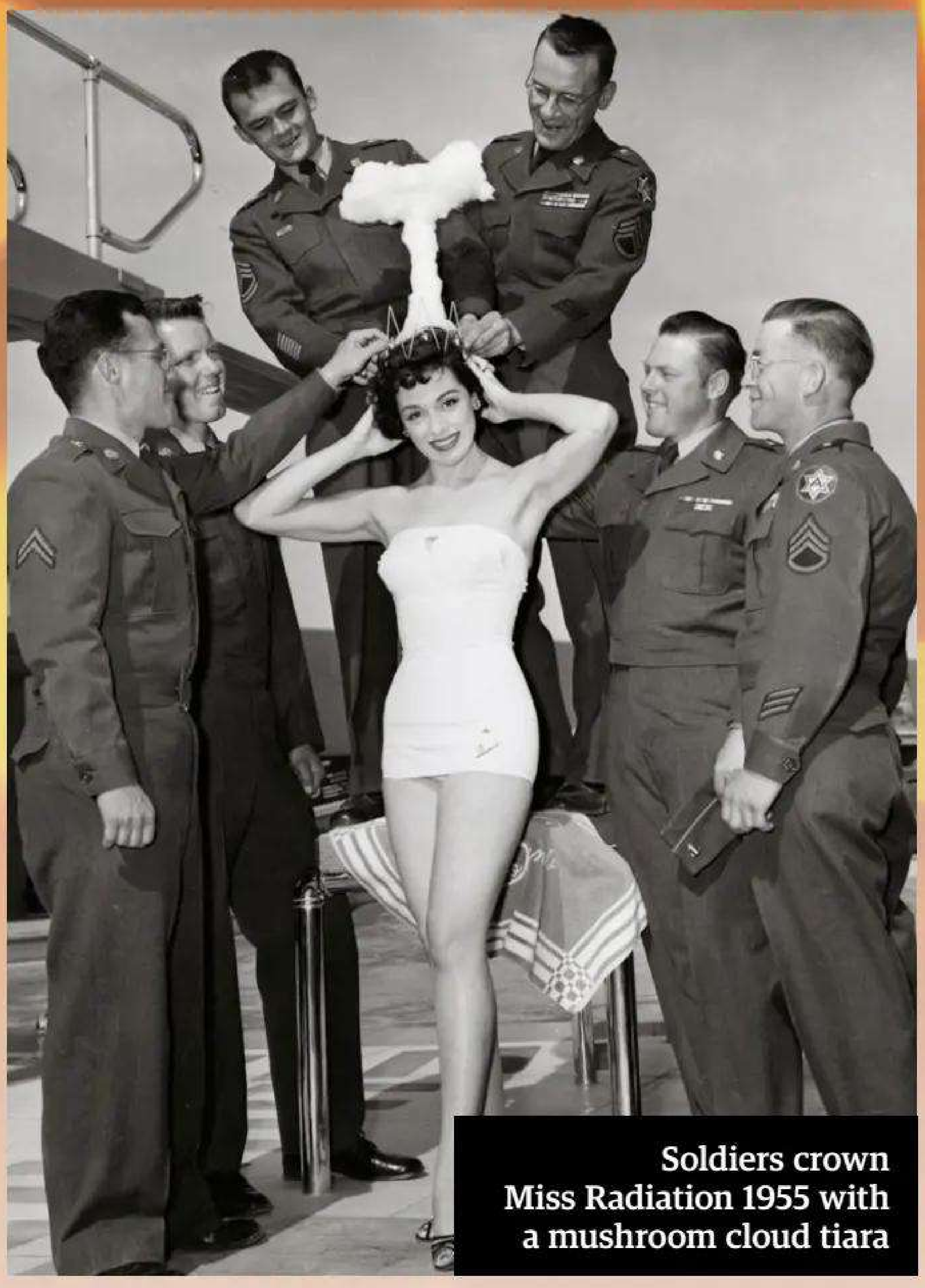
The Atomic Cocktail

Raise your drink to the Destroyer of Worlds

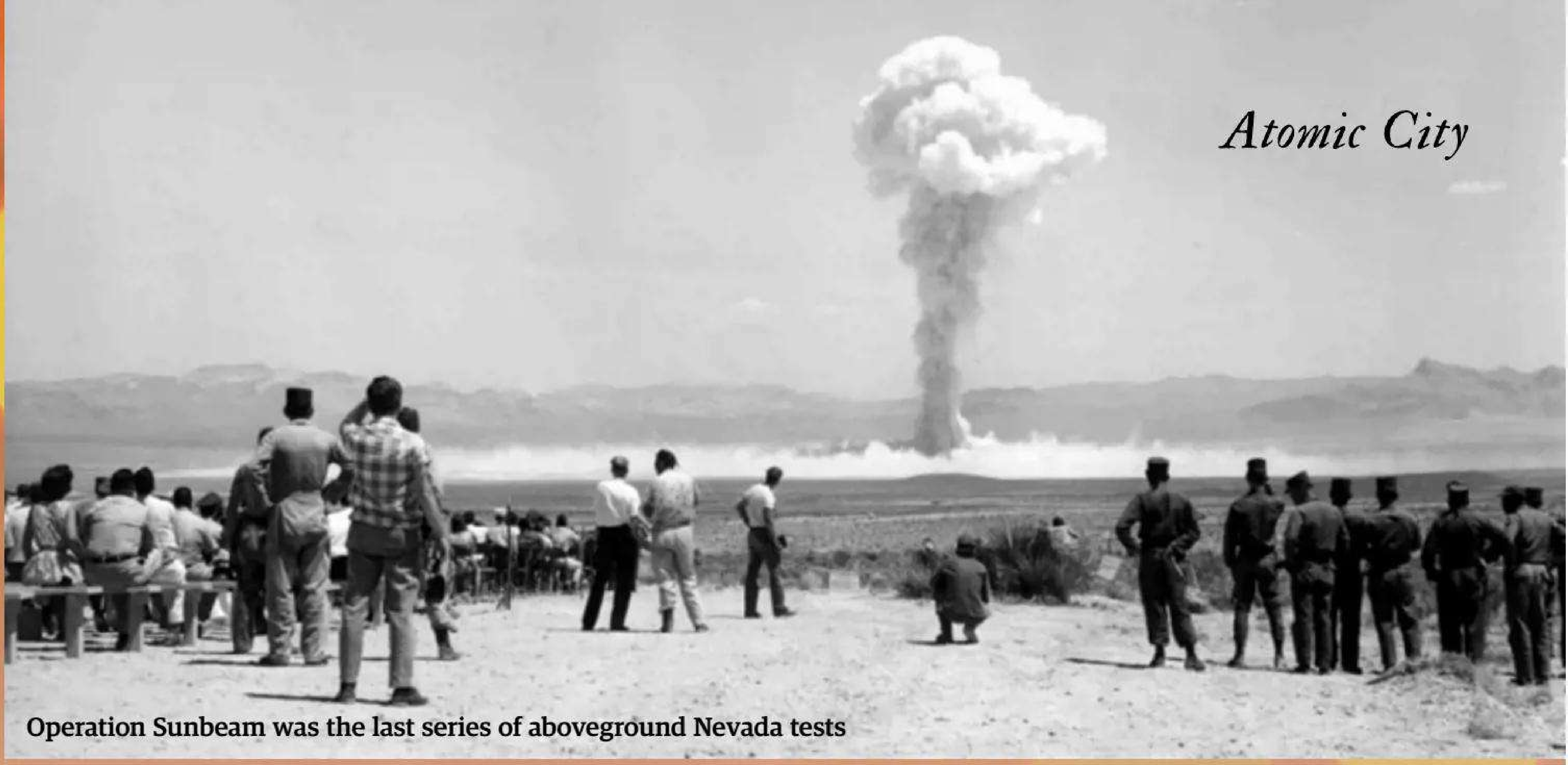
"It's the drink that you don't pour / Now when you take one sip, you won't need anymore," the jazz hipster Slim Gaillard sang on his 1945 song *Atomic Cocktail*. *"When you see it coming, grab your suitcase / It'll send you through the sky like airmail."* Gaillard, who features in Jack Kerouac's 1957 seminal novel *On the Road*, knew about flying and explosives. In 1943, he suspended his jazz career to fly B-26 bombers in the Pacific.

The atomic cocktail was a real drink and it was served in Vegas during the bomb testing years. Mix ½ ounce (43 millilitres) of vodka, 1½ ounces of cognac and a teaspoon of sherry in a cocktail shaker. Shake with ice, strain into a chilled martini glass, and add a further 1½ ounces of chilled Champagne. As Gaillard sang, "Boom!"

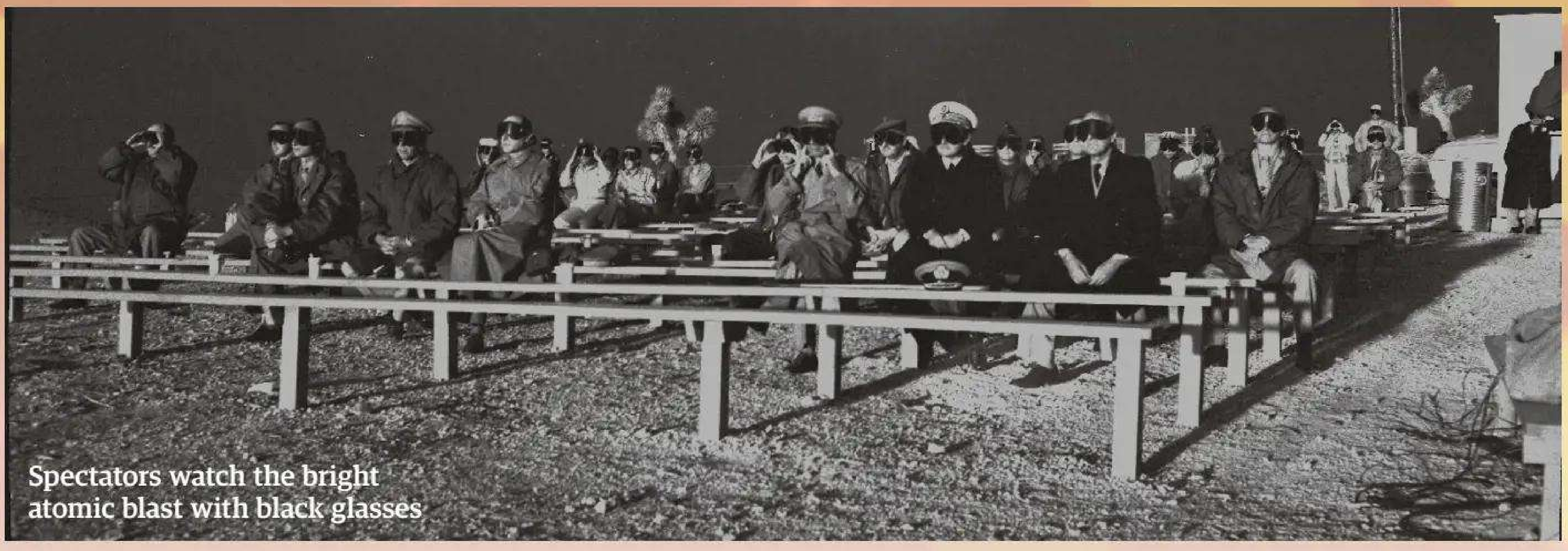




Soldiers crown Miss Radiation 1955 with a mushroom cloud tiara



Operation Sunbeam was the last series of aboveground Nevada tests



Spectators watch the bright atomic blast with black glasses

with a giant mushroom cloud and swimsuit-clad models. The city designated the Nevada Proving Ground test site as a tourist attraction and the Chamber of Commerce printed calendars that listed detonation times and recommended the best vantage points to watch the explosions. Benny Binion's Horseshoe Casino and its rival Desert Inn capitalised on their north-facing vistas by holding 'Dawn Bomb Parties'. These all-night events saw guests dance and drink 'atomic cocktails'. Carefully coordinated with the military tests, these parties went out with a bang — the flash of a nuclear blast, brighter than the sun, went off at dawn.

The mushroom cloud became one of Las Vegas' most iconic symbols, appearing on billboards, casino marquees and, thanks to the nuclear industry's dominance over local white-collar employment, Las Vegas High School's yearbook. Showgirls and beauty queens donned mushroom-cloud costumes – the most famous of which was Sands Hotel dancer Lee A. Merlin, who featured in a promotional advertisement sporting a cotton-wool mushroom cloud swimsuit in 1957, earning her the title Miss Atomic Bomb. The commitment to the cloud paid off and by 1954, eight million tourists were visiting the city every year.

Nuclear radiation was known to be fatal but its effects were not yet quantified. The US Army brought truckloads of soldiers and sat them close to the blast site without any protection. Instead, they were sometimes told to cover their eyes or sit with their backs to the blast in case the flash damaged their sight. Afterwards, the dust from the detonations was hosed and brushed off their uniforms and skin. Unsurprisingly, those exposed in this way suffered high rates of premature death from cancer. As did the 'downwinders', people living downwind from the blasts in the small farming communities of Utah.

The glamorous Las Vegas of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis, Jr was also a living test ground for the effects of atomic radiation. There was a detonation every three weeks throughout the 1950s. Photographers filmed the tests from as little as 11 kilometres away, protected by nothing more than dark sunglasses.

"We used to get up in the morning, drive out to the highway and watch the blast," Las Vegas resident Gail Andress told the *Las Vegas Weekly* in 2012. Andress and his wife Donna, now both in their 80s, were regular spectators of the detonations.

> Las Vegas capitalised on the nearby atomic bomb detonations, designating the test site as a tourist attraction

"It looked like the sun come up again. It lit the whole area. We were assured there wasn't going to be a problem. It was real interesting. It was an attraction." Andress, who had served as a US Navy aerial gunner in World War II, would count from the time of the blast to "see how long before the wind would come and rattle the blinds."

Alveta McBride was a switchboard operator at the test site. On one occasion, she and her co-workers were driven to a viewing area less than two kilometres from the blast — the dust hit them with such force that hats flew off heads and some viewers were knocked completely off their feet.

Las Vegas' atomic party came to an end in 1963. The Cuban Missile Crisis the previous October had brought the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war. The Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 was a joint attempt to lower the rising temperature of the Cold War, banning testing in the atmosphere, in space and underwater. Although atomic experiments continued in Nevada until the 1990s, they were only conducted underground, meaning they couldn't be seen from any hotel swimming pool.

Still, the bomb remains part of Las Vegas' tourist industry today. The National Atomic Testing Museum is situated just over one and a half kilometres from the Strip and offers an immersive experience. Exhibits include a variety of Atomic Age artefacts including pop culture memorabilia – such as the Atomic Bomb Ring, a mail-in prize, free with Kix Cereal and containing real polonium, and the 1950 Gilbert U-238 Atomic Energy Laboratory toy – as well as historical relics, including a real atomic bomb, presumably deactivated, and copies of the *Survival Under Atomic Attack* booklets given to tourists in the 1950s.

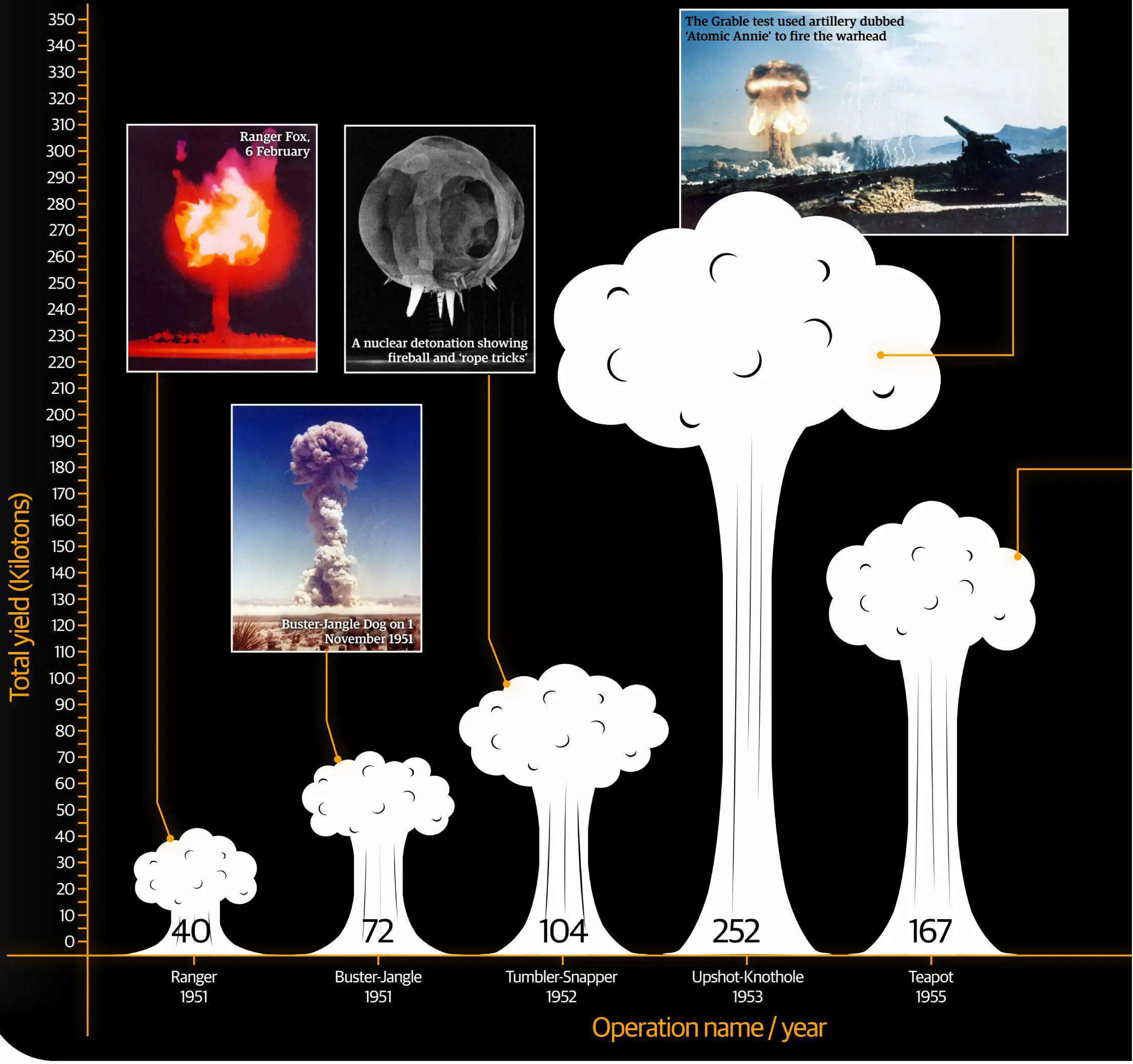
Once a month, the Department of Energy takes visitors on a free tour of the ghostly testing ground, now known as the Nevada National Security Site, with no cameras, videos or selfie sticks allowed. Today, the town of Mercury, Nevada, is collapsing — but the tower and cabling for the Icecap test still stand undamaged. On 2 October 1992, days before a warhead was scheduled to be detonated from the top of the tower, President George HW Bush signed into law a moratorium on further nuclear experiments. Atomic City was well and truly gone.

© Getty Images; Las Vegas News Bureau

HAVING A BLAST

Different series of tests meant that Las Vegas' tourist industry just kept on booming

Between the first detonation in Nevada in 1951 and the 1992 moratorium on nuclear testing, 928 American nuclear tests were carried out at the Nevada Proving Grounds. 100 of these were detonated above ground and 828 below but it was the aboveground ones that really drew the crowds. These were conducted in codenamed batches or series. The chart below shows all the aboveground tests that occured in Nevada prior to the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty. The 'total yield' refers to the combined amount of energy released by all the bombs dropped in each series. For reference, one kiloton is equal to the power of 1,000 tons of TNT.

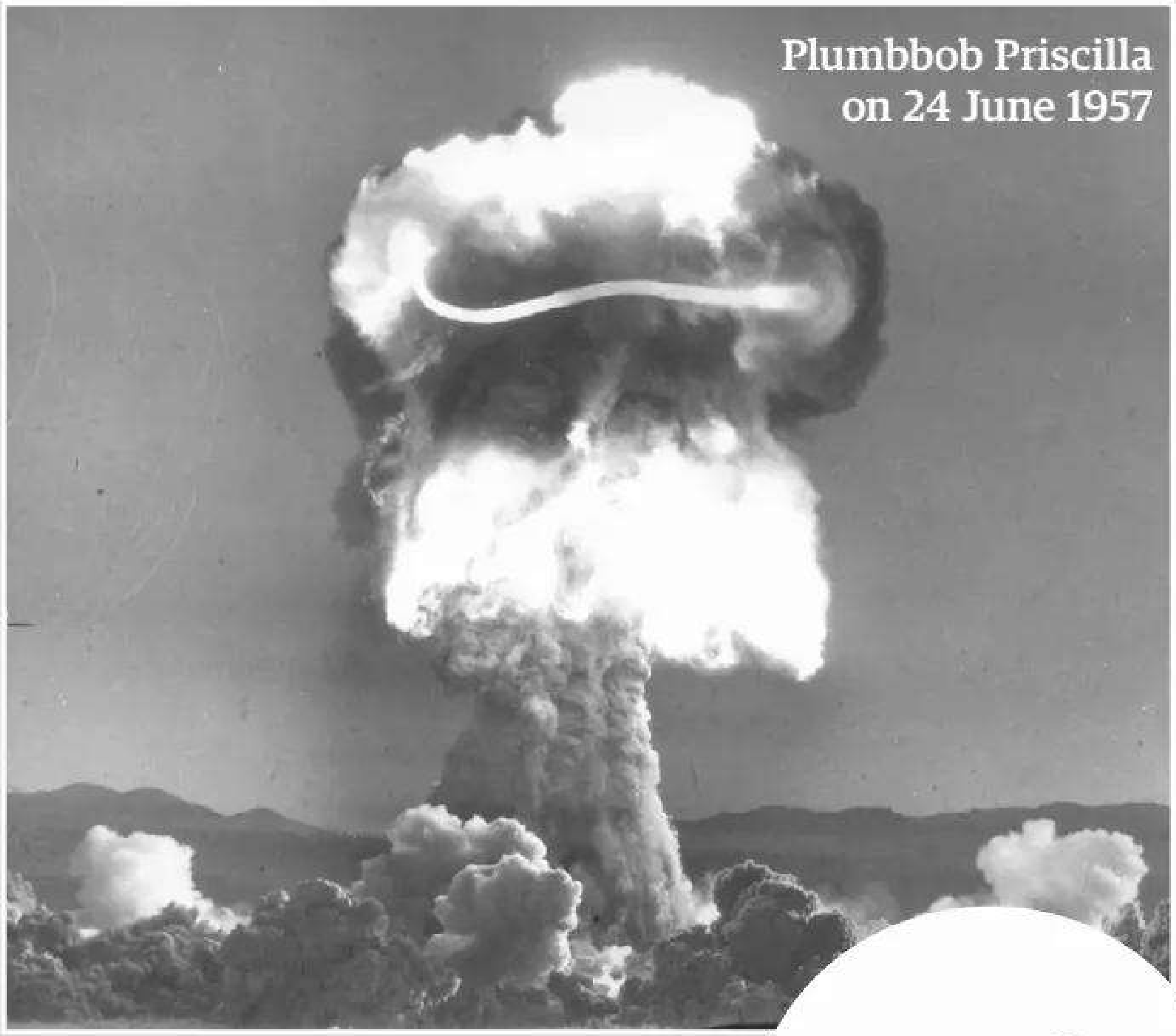


Ranger Fox, 6 February

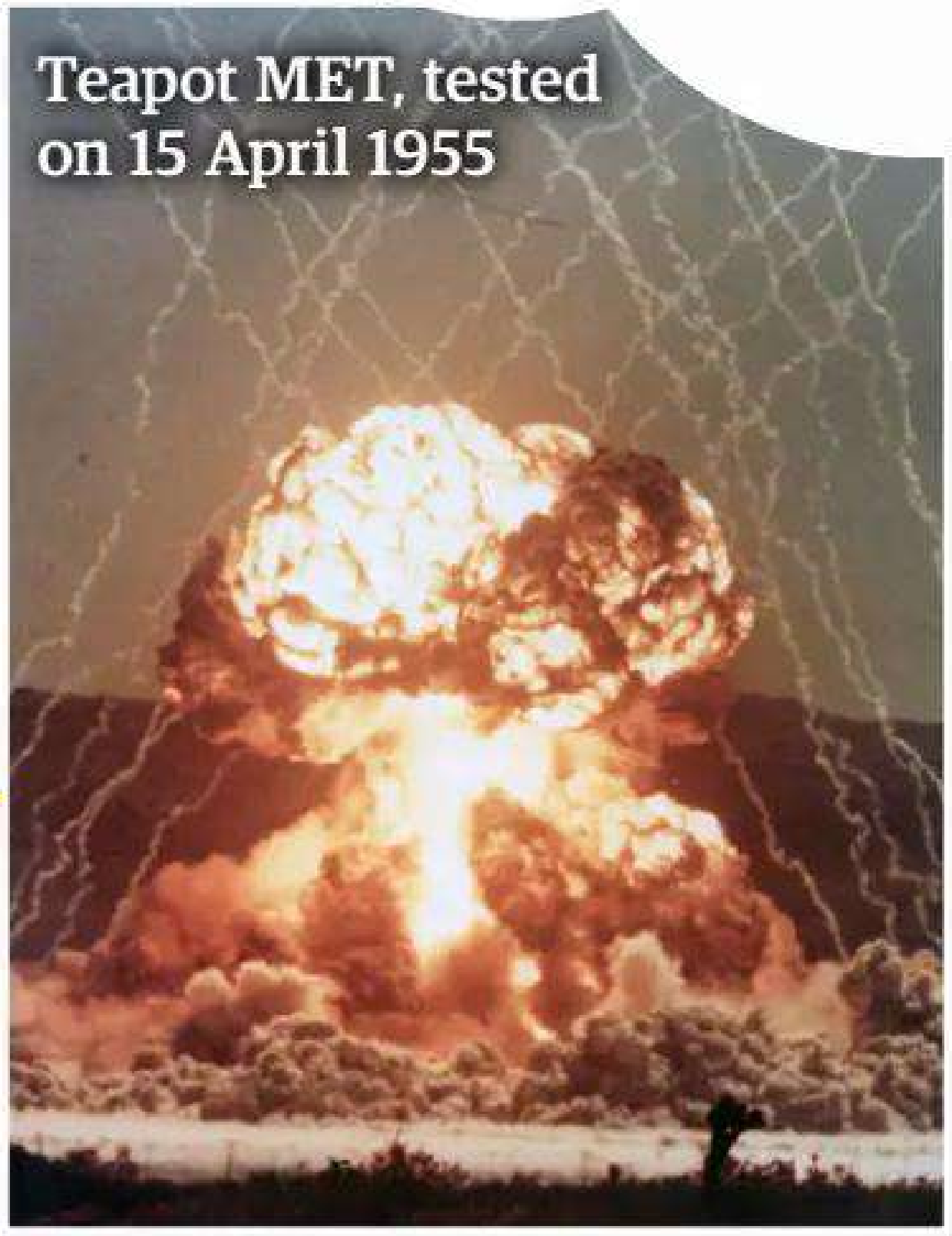
A nuclear detonation showing fireball and 'rope tricks'

The Grable test used artillery dubbed 'Atomic Annie' to fire the warhead

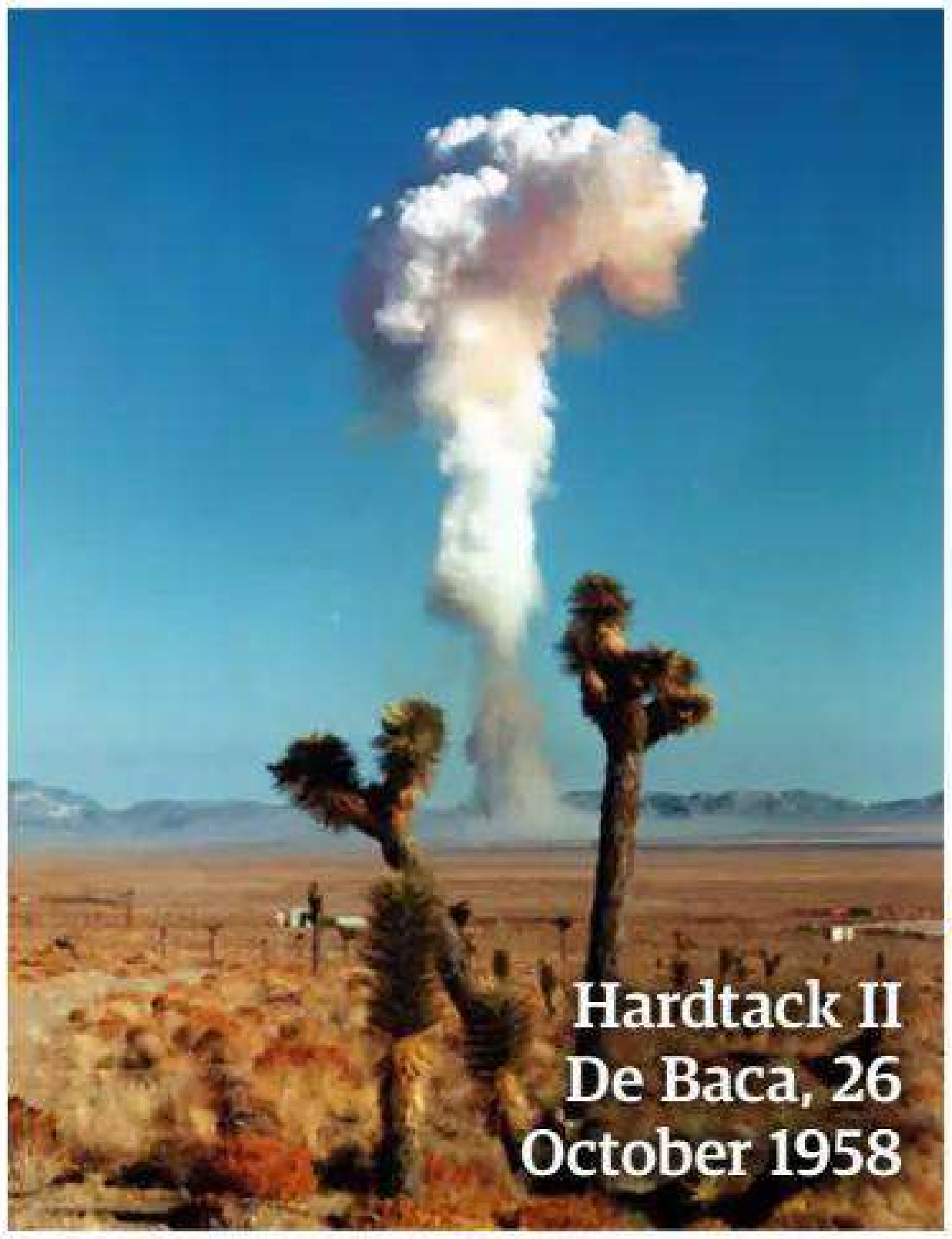
Buster-Jangle Dog on 1 November 1951



Plumbbob Priscilla on 24 June 1957



Teapot MET, tested on 15 April 1955



Hardtack II De Baca, 26 October 1958

BOOMTOWN STATS

Las Vegas was the fastest-growing city in the United States in the 20th century

•1910s•
Las Vegas was incorporated as city in 1911. It was an important stopover for miners working in the area but it still remained rather small.

•1930s•
The year 1931 was pivotal to Vegas as Nevada legalised gambling, reduced requirements for divorce to six weeks and work started on the nearby Hoover Dam.

Year	Population
1900	25
1910	800
1920	2,304
1930	5,165
1940	8,422
1950	24,624
1960	64,400
1970	125,787

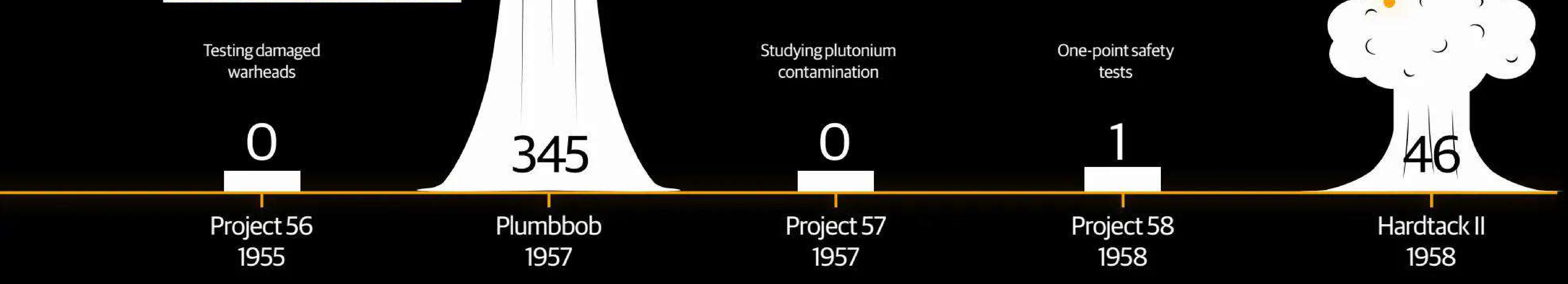
•1900s•
The town of Las Vegas was founded in 1905 when 110 acres of land adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks were auctioned off.

•1930s•
The construction of the Hoover Dam from 1931 to 1935 brought an influx of workers and their families to the city.

•1940s•
Post-war prosperity led to lavishly decorated hotels and casinos appearing in the desert, offering big name entertainers in order to attract tourists.

•1950s•
With the arrival of Manhattan Project scientists and staff to test atom bombs in the desert, the population grew 192.4 per cent between 1940 and 1950.

•1960s•
By 1960, the city's population had grown another 161.6 per cent. A firmly established tourist attraction, Las Vegas continued to grow after aboveground nuke testing ended in 1963.



An inmate of Sing Sing prison is strapped into Old Sparky moments before he is electrocuted to death

© Getty Images

Inside the DEATH HOUSE

Between 1890 and 1963 New York's Sing Sing prison served more death sentences than anywhere else in the United States thanks to its purpose-built factory of execution: the Death House

Words Robert Walsh

Sing Sing. The name alone implies violence, hard labour, harder punishments, misery and death. Even the very words are foreboding, coming from the Native American phrase 'Sinck Sinck' meaning 'stone upon stone'. Nowadays known by the more anodyne name of the Ossining Correctional Institution, Sing Sing is one of the world's most notorious prisons, and there's one part that earned more notoriety than any other: The 'Death House'.

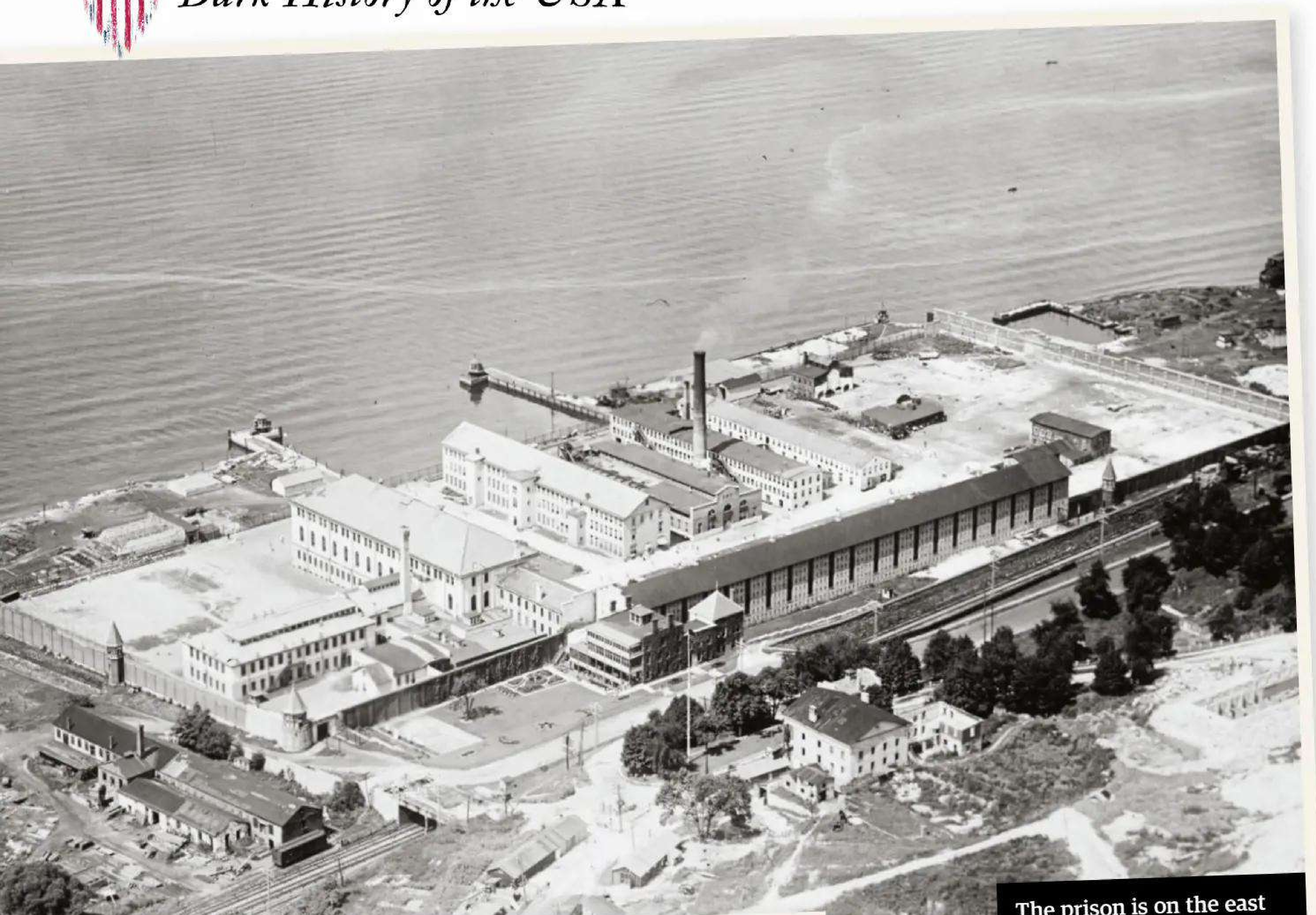
New York State abolished capital punishment in 1969. Its last execution was of murderer Eddie Lee Mays on 15 August 1963. Before abolition, New York hanged, shot and burned criminals at different times until, in 1889, the state adopted something new: the electric chair. Between 1890 and 1963, 614 inmates walked their 'Last Mile' between their cell and the death chamber. Once strapped into the electric chair, nicknamed 'Old Sparky', they would 'ride the lightning'.

First used on William Kemmler at Auburn Prison on 6 August 1890, New York originally had three chairs at Auburn, Dannemora and Sing Sing. Authorities felt three chairs were needed to manage the constant influx of condemned inmates delivered by New York's mandatory death sentence for murder. But by 1915, demand proving lower than expected, only the electric chair at Sing Sing remained.

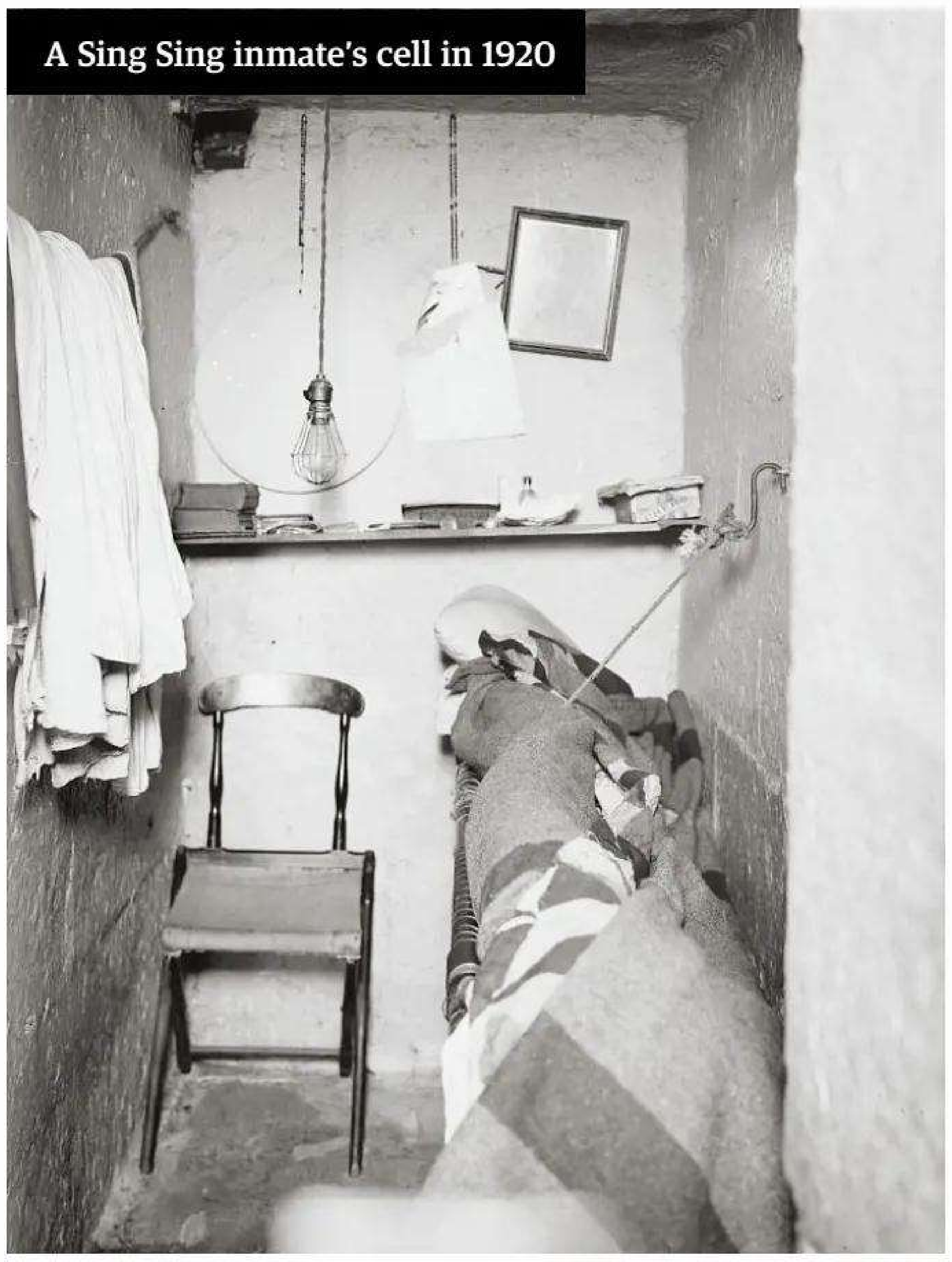
Sing Sing had two buildings reserved exclusively for the condemned. The original Death House had opened in 1890 and comprised of cells, a guardroom, doctor's room, an office for meetings and sanity hearings, kitchen and, of course, the execution chamber. But its design caused significant problems.

The death chamber was so close to the cells that inmates heard executions being performed. The generator and humming electricity cables were clearly audible to them. They even heard the inmate's last words, if they said any. Worse, New York state law required an autopsy immediately after execution. The autopsy room being next to the death chamber, inmates clearly heard that too.

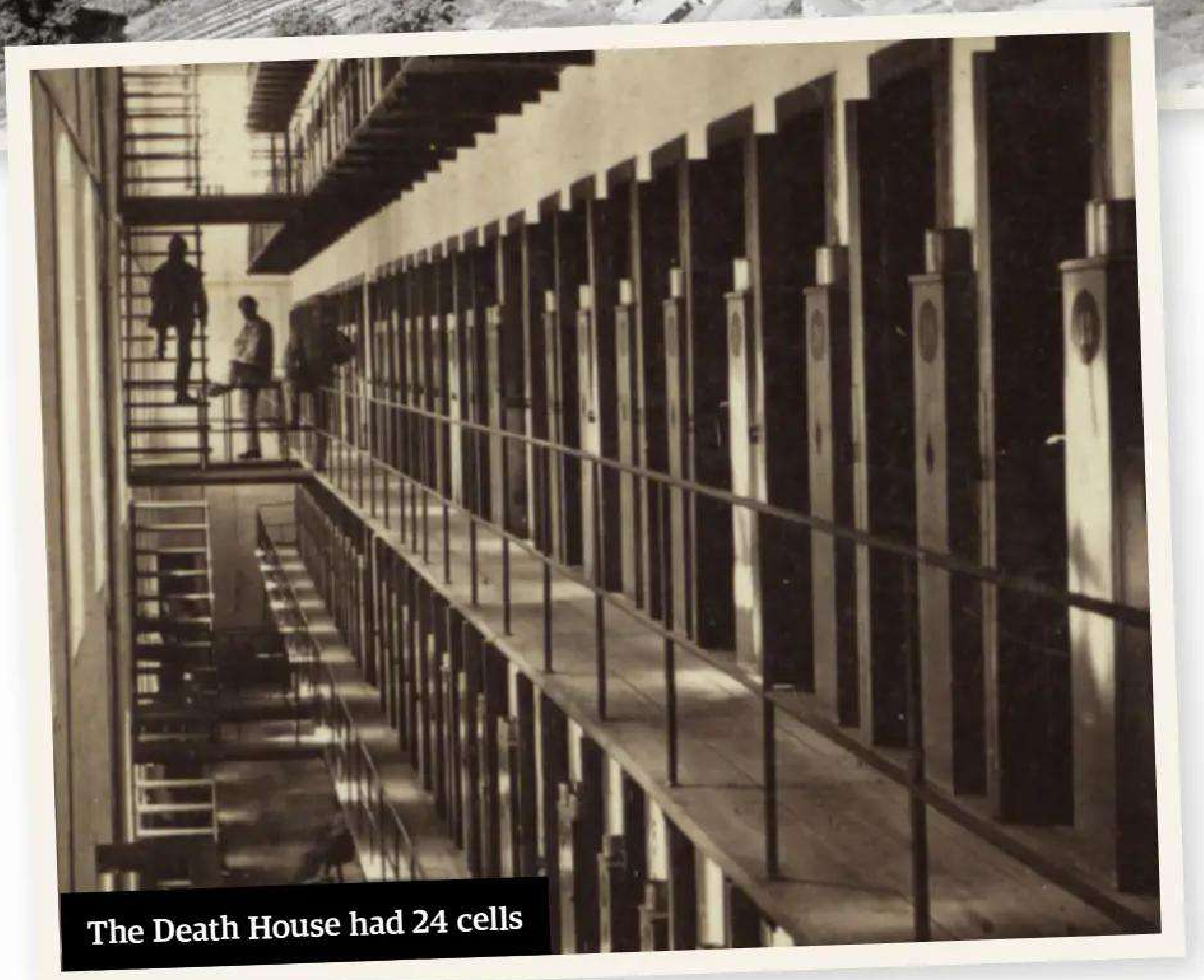
Another serious problem was security. Condemned inmates are often regarded as the most dangerous because they have nothing to



The prison is on the east bank of the Hudson River



A Sing Sing inmate's cell in 1920



The Death House had 24 cells

> *"It was often during the shower and shave that their fate finally sank in if it hadn't already"*

lose by attacking staff and other inmates, inciting riots and attempting escape. The best that most condemned inmates can expect is their sentence to be commuted to life imprisonment so, either way, they'll die behind bars. They have no reason to co-operate and every reason to cause trouble.

In 1916, murderer Oresto Shillitoni used a smuggled gun to escape the original Death House. Shillitoni was later recaptured and executed for four murders. A brand-new, custom-built Death House was called for. State Architect Lewis Pilcher designed the new facility, which opened in 1922, and it was unique.

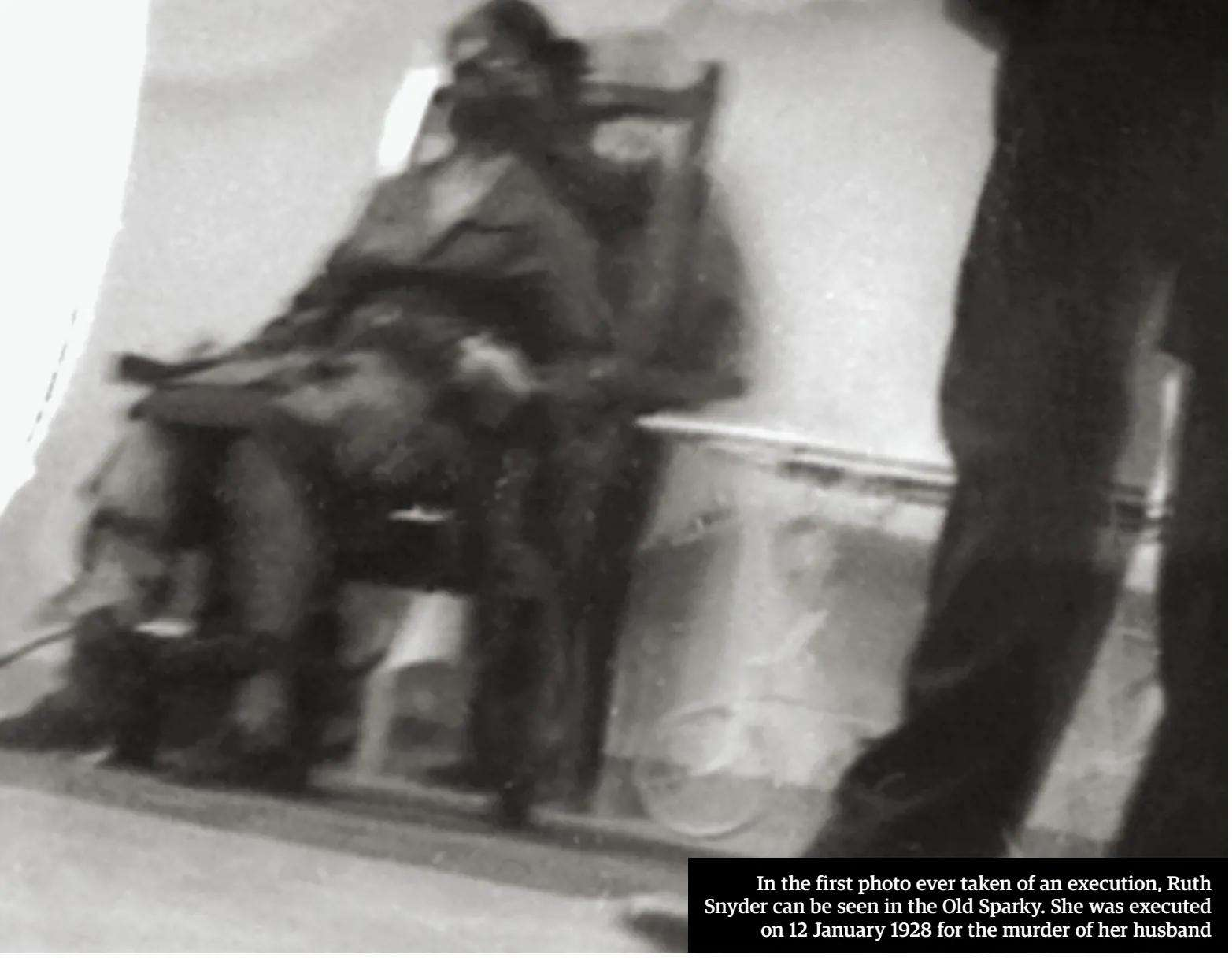
The new building had 24 cells for men and six for women. It featured its own guardroom, two tiny exercise yards, kitchen, Chaplain's room, doctor's office, dentist's room, an office for the State Lunacy Commission to decide whether inmates were sane enough to die and a padded cell for those deemed insane. There were six pre-execution cells, nicknamed The Dancehall, where prisoners spent execution day and, of course, the execution chamber with adjoining autopsy room and mortuary. Pilcher's design meant that cells and execution chamber were far enough apart that prisoners couldn't hear a thing.

Security was as strict as humanly possible. Guards were hand-picked and, sometimes, reassigned when the stress became too much. Former guard Samuel Seager later became one of Eliott Ness's 'Untouchables' after leaving Sing Sing. All visitors underwent an FBI background check and were searched upon arrival. Complaints or refusals meant they were refused admission. A wire screen separated inmates and visitors during visits, which were supervised by Death House guards. For their final visitation before execution, prisoners could spend longer than usual with their guests, albeit under the same strict rules. When the guards decided it was time to end a visit, they stepped in and visitors were politely told to leave.

Cells were searched at random. Prisoners were forbidden to keep their own matches or lighters so, if they wanted to smoke, they had to ask a guard for a light. Food was served with crockery and cutlery made from thin aluminium so that prisoners couldn't steal them and make weapons. All mail, incoming and outgoing, was routinely opened, read, copied and censored. Anything considered potentially suspect wasn't delivered. Even a prisoner's last letters, a Death Row tradition, received the standard checks. None were delivered in time for the inmate to receive a reply.

The concept was simple. Once you went in, you were unlikely to come out alive. Occasionally prisoners left for court hearings or hospital visits, assuming they were deemed too ill for the prison infirmary. Other than that, they ate, slept, exercised, wrote letters, filed appeals, consulted lawyers and counted days until their execution all within the building. Those hoping for courts or the state governor to save them were frequently disappointed. Only one-third of Death House inmates secured reprieves or commutations. Some, like Edward Kelly, were fortunate enough to win an appeal for a new trial only to be re-convicted, re-sentenced and returned for execution.

Many people today think of the USA's death penalty as the preserve of Southern states like Virginia, Florida and Texas. During the 1920s and 1930s, when business was most brisk, Sing Sing routinely performed more executions than any other American prison. Single executions were standard, doubles not unusual, triples happened sometimes and multiples, though rare, also featured. For multiple executions, four or five inmates would die consecutively in one night. Sing Sing's largest multiple execution was in 1912, when seven inmates were killed consecutively on the night of 12 August.



In the first photo ever taken of an execution, Ruth Snyder can be seen in the Old Sparky. She was executed on 12 January 1928 for the murder of her husband

Images of inmates being dragged to their deaths are largely myth. The vast majority of Sing Sing's condemned went quietly. They simply walked their Last Mile from the Dancehall to the death chamber. They said their last words, if they had any, sat down, were strapped in, the switch was thrown and they were certified dead. Some, like tuberculosis patient Leo Jankowski, actually welcomed death. Jankowski, executed in 1920, suffered so badly from his illness that he cried with joy and kissed the chair, declaring that he'd never been so happy to see anything.

Another popular myth was of lights dimming during executions. The chair had its own generator, separate from the main prison power supply, so - barring a serious malfunction or a lightning strike - nothing disturbed the prison's main electrical system.

Nor did most of them die with a roomful of reporters watching. New York required all executions to be witnessed by journalists. Like all visitors, they underwent the FBI check and were only admitted with a written invitation from the Warden. No invitation, no entry.

Media attention depended on the notoriety (or lack thereof) of the inmates. Many, especially from ethnic minorities, died with only a local reporter or two in attendance, receiving only a line or two in local newspapers. At the other end of the scale, cannibal Albert Fish, racketeer Louis 'Lepke' Buchalter, 'Lonely Hearts Killers' Raymond Fernandez and Martha Beck, and atom bomb spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg attracted so many reporters that the Warden refused more journalists than he admitted.

This is in complete contrast to contemporary British executions, where only prison staff, executioners, occasional invited observers and the condemned were allowed. New York's newspaper readers had detailed (if not always entirely accurate) reports of executions. British readers were denied most details other than an official notice posted on prison gates after a hanging. British executions were shrouded in official secrecy. New York's were openly reported so that justice could be seen to have been served.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Sing Sing's Death House routinely performed more executions than any other American prison

Executions were traditionally performed on Thursdays, known as Black Thursday. New York's death warrants didn't specify a particular date, only a particular week. When courts granted a stay of execution, then executions were postponed. If the appeal failed, the prisoner was brought into court and re-sentenced by their trial judge. Court hearings were one of the very few reasons condemned inmates left the confinements of the Death House. For most, it was a brief view of the outside world under armed escort only to have their appeals denied and their sentences reaffirmed.

The Death House held some of the USA's most notable criminals. In 1899, Martha Place, condemned for murdering her step-daughter, made history as the first woman to be electrocuted.

Cannibal Albert Fish (executed in 1936) looked forward to his execution, stating openly that: "The electric chair will be the supreme thrill, and the only one I haven't tried."

INFAMOUS LAST WORDS

Inmates were always asked for last words. Many had none; others plenty

"Well folks, you're shortly about to see a baked Appel"

George Appel, 1928

"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Ruth Snyder, 1928

"I'm here on a framed-up case"

Emmanuel 'Mendy' Weiss, 1944

"Is this all there is to it?"

Arthur Waite, 1917

"Gentlemen, you're about to witness the effect electricity has on Wood"

Frederick Wood, 1963

Replica of Sing Sing's Old Sparky on display at The Mob Museum, Las Vegas

© Getty Images, Alamy

Calling the Electrician

Sing Sing's executioners needed a specific set of skills

Sing Sing had five executioners between 1890 and 1963, officially titled State Electricians. Edwin Davis, John Hurlburt, Robert Elliott, Joseph Francel and Dow Hover executed 614 inmates in New York alone. State Electricians had to be qualified electricians with no criminal record and good character references.

They earned $150 for single executions. Multiples paid $50 per additional inmate. A private contractor, New York's executioner could also work for other states and usually did.

Elliott, credited with 387 executions during his career, was employed by New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Vermont and Connecticut. On 6 January 1927, Elliott performed a triple electrocution in Massachusetts, then visited Sing Sing for another triple execution the same day.

At Sing Sing, 614 inmates were executed when they sat in the electric chair

> "The inmate's body thrust against the straps, their shoulders hitting the chair's backrest with an audible slap as their hands clenched"

Ruth Snyder, executed in 1928, attracted huge media coverage. Condemned with lover Judd Gray for murdering her husband Albert, her case was immortalised in classic movie *Double Indemnity* and the play *Machinal*. 'Lepke' Buchalter, executed in 1944 with two accomplices, remains the only top-level American gangster to be legally executed.

The 'Lonely Hearts Killers' Raymond Fernandez and Martha Beck died in 1951 for a string of murders. Fernandez lured wealthy women via classified advertisements. They then murdered and robbed them before concealing their bodies.

> The concept for the Death House was simple. Once you went in, you were unlikely to come out alive

Illustrating the media hierarchy among New York's condemned, Beck and Fernandez were only two of four inmates executed that night. John King and Richard Powers, convicted of murdering a detective, barely rated mentions in accounts that grimly described Fernandez being helped into the chair having almost collapsed in terror. New York's scribes further excelled themselves with detailed descriptions of how Martha, who was morbidly obese, had to be squeezed into the chair before she could be strapped down.

Black Thursday was as strictly regulated as every other day. In the morning, the inmate was moved from their regular cell to the Dancehall. They waited for a commutation or stay, neither of which was likely by that point. Their lawyers visited, usually to commiserate and say goodbye.

Sing Sing had a generous policy on the traditional last meal, so they could order both a last dinner and last supper. Aside from alcohol, they could have anything within reason and ate in their cell. Guards sat outside the cell on permanent watch for suicide attempts. If the prisoner wanted religious support, Sing Sing had Protestant and Catholic chaplains and a rabbi for Jewish inmates.

Subject to security, they could receive their last visitors, who were permitted to stay longer than usual on the final day.

There were other, grimmer, parts of the ritual. Inmates had to take a hot shower or bath as dirt might cause a fire hazard when the switch was thrown. Their hair was cropped by the Death House barber for the same reason. It was often during the shower and shave that their fate finally sank in, if it hadn't already. Very occasionally inmates panicked, mistaking the barber's chair for Old Sparky and the barber for the executioner. To avoid distressing their final visitors, the shower and shave happened after they had already left.

Perhaps the hardest part, after their last visit, was their last letter. They didn't always send one, but many did. Like their last words, their last letters varied from apologetic to philosophical to bitter, angry and defiant. Some claimed innocence. Some blamed incompetent lawyers, corrupt police, biased judges or perjured witnesses. They varied from eloquent to barely literate, but all revealed something about their writers. With time short and their end near, many inmates dropped whatever front they'd hidden behind beforehand.

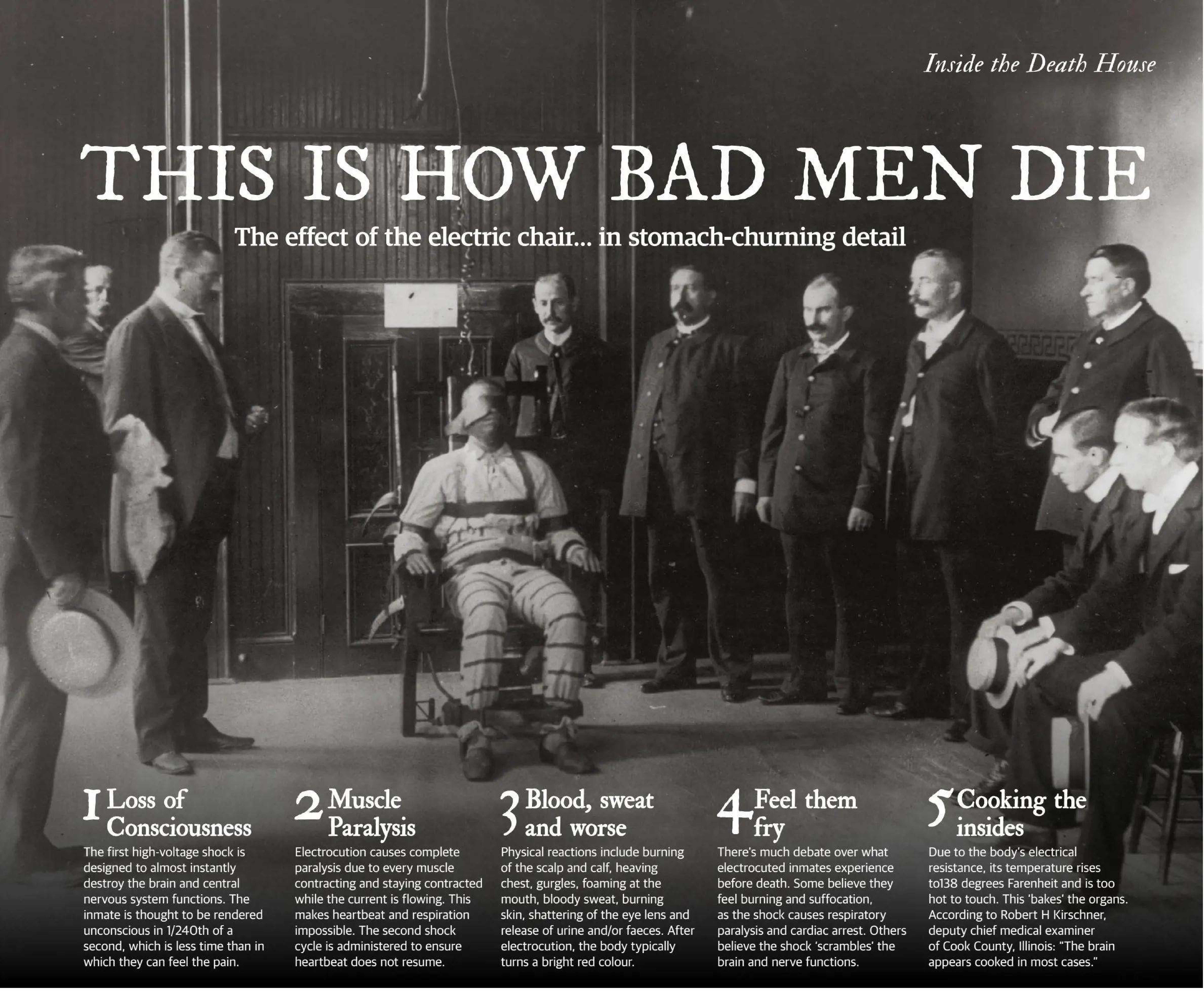
Some wardens, like Wilfred Denno, avoided visiting condemned inmates on execution day, not wanting to offer false hope of a last-minute stay or commutation. In 1928, Ruth Snyder was told of a stay of execution, only to be informed later that she would die that night. She did. Other wardens, like Lewis Lawes, always visited inmates on their final day. On one memorable occasion in 1925, Patrick Murphy broke the rules by asking Lawes for a final drink. Lawes, who loathed executions, brought Murphy two ounces of whiskey. Murphy, knowing Lawes's feelings, handed back the bottle saying: "Warden, you look like you need this more than I do."

While the inmates had their final meal, visit, shower and haircut, the execution team rehearsed. The executioner tested the chair, electrodes, generator, wires and switches to ensure all was well. The warden assembled the witnesses in his office, briefing them on how to behave and what to expect. Hand-picked guards would be assigned their roles in escorting the inmate between the Dancehall and death chamber. They were also briefed on securing the prisoner with heavy leather straps and applying an electrode to their shaven right leg. The head electrode was inside a specially made helmet placed by the executioner.

At 10.55pm, the ritual began. The warden, four guards and a chaplain or rabbi opened the inmate's cell and escorted them into the death chamber. Once inside, things happened quickly. The warden asked them for their final words, usually there weren't any. The inmate was seated with heavy leather straps securing their limbs and torso. A guard fixed the leg electrode while

THIS IS HOW BAD MEN DIE

The effect of the electric chair… in stomach-churning detail



1 Loss of Consciousness

The first high-voltage shock is designed to almost instantly destroy the brain and central nervous system functions. The inmate is thought to be rendered unconscious in 1/240th of a second, which is less time than in which they can feel the pain.

2 Muscle Paralysis

Electrocution causes complete paralysis due to every muscle contracting and staying contracted while the current is flowing. This makes heartbeat and respiration impossible. The second shock cycle is administered to ensure heartbeat does not resume.

3 Blood, sweat and worse

Physical reactions include burning of the scalp and calf, heaving chest, gurgles, foaming at the mouth, bloody sweat, burning skin, shattering of the eye lens and release of urine and/or faeces. After electrocution, the body typically turns a bright red colour.

4 Feel them fry

There's much debate over what electrocuted inmates experience before death. Some believe they feel burning and suffocation, as the shock causes respiratory paralysis and cardiac arrest. Others believe the shock 'scrambles' the brain and nerve functions.

5 Cooking the insides

Due to the body's electrical resistance, its temperature rises to138 degrees Farenheit and is too hot to touch. This 'bakes' the organs. According to Robert H Kirschner, deputy chief medical examiner of Cook County, Illinois: "The brain appears cooked in most cases."

the executioner placed the helmet, containing a natural sponge soaked in brine to aid conduction, over the inmate's head. A leather mask was strapped tightly across their face and around the back of the chair, holding their head steady to avoid electrode contact from breaking.

With the prisoner fully secured, guards stepped away for their own safety and to afford witnesses a clear view. The executioner stood by his switchboard awaiting a silent signal from the Warden. Then the signal came.

The executioner threw the switch, carefully watching the prisoner's body. An increasingly loud, sputtering drone began. Tendrils of smoke rose from the electrodes and a burning odour filled the room. The inmate's body thrust against the straps, their shoulders hitting the chair's backrest with an audible slap as their hands clenched against the chair's arms. New York's executioners evolved a cycle of shocks to kill without causing unnecessary burning. During a two-minute 'jolt', inmates received 2,000 volts for three seconds, 500 volts for 57 seconds, 2,000 volts for three seconds, 500 volts for 54 seconds and 2,000 volts for the last three seconds. Then the power was shut off.

The prison doctor waited for the body to cool down enough for examination. While the inmate slumped in the chair, reporters took notes, although photography was entirely forbidden. This didn't stop Ruth Snyder's execution being photographed with a hidden camera, almost costing Lewis Lawes his job and causing compulsory body searches for all witnesses at subsequent executions.

A stethoscope check confirmed either death or that a second 'jolt' was needed. A dead prisoner was unstrapped, put on a stretcher and wheeled into the adjoining autopsy room while witnesses were escorted from the prison.

If the inmate was still alive (which happened frequently) the doctor signalled for another jolt before checking again. The executioner delivered as many jolts as necessary.

Sooner or later (Ethel Rosenberg was shocked five times before she finally died) the inmate was certified dead. The Warden directed witnesses to leave after signing forms certifying they'd witnessed the execution.

The prison doctor began the autopsy while guards switched off the lights and locked the doors. In the Death House cells, guards removed the inmate's nametag from their cell, packaged up their personal effects to send back to family or friends, remade their bed and then left. After the autopsy, the inmate's family could claim their body, or it was sent directly to a funeral home for burial or cremation.

And then? Another death sentence. The ritual simply began again.

© Getty Images

INNOCENT

Words by Edoardo Albert

Overnight aliens

1942-46

Japanese American families arrive at Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Park County, Wyoming. In the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor many Americans immediately became suspicious of the second- and third-generation Japanese Americans living in the US, most of whom were located on the West Coast.

Following a suggestion from Lieutenant General John L DeWitt, President Roosevelt ordered the internment of Japanese families residing in America. Between 19 February 1942 and 20 March 1946, between 110,000 and 122,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly relocated and incarcerated in ten concentration camps. As a result, many children spent their first years within the confines of these barbed-wire fenced encampments.

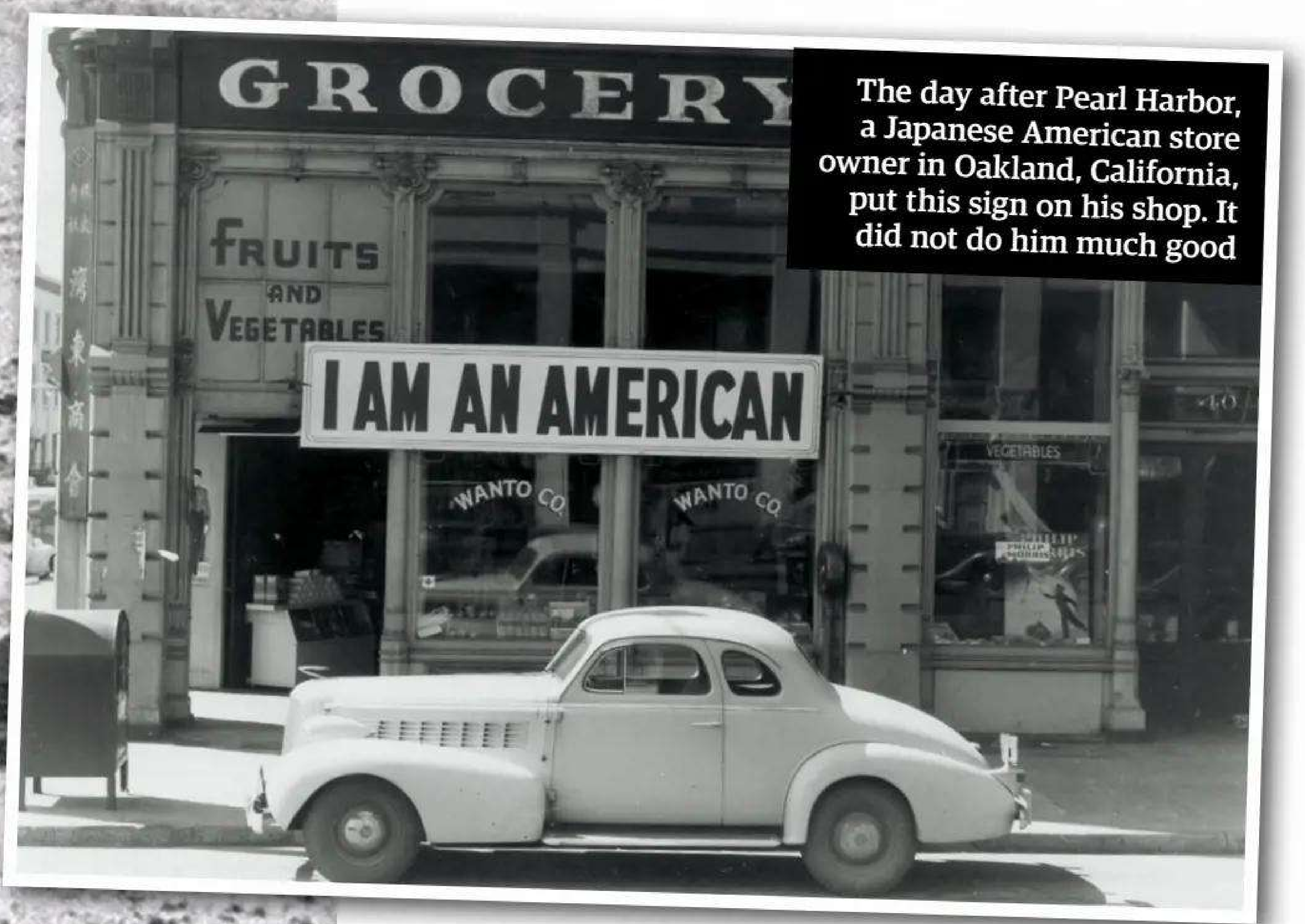
SUSPECTS

The rights of Japanese Americans were among the casualties of Pearl Harbor

Written by Edoardo Albert

There was a name for them. Under a law passed in 1798, immigrants from Japan, Germany and Italy became 'alien enemies' following the United States' declaration of war against those countries. The Alien Enemies Act gives the president the power to deport or imprison the citizens of countries with which the United States finds itself at war. The question that faced President Roosevelt in the early months of 1942 was how far he should exercise this power.

It was a question that had arisen 25 years earlier, when the United States entered World War I. In the 19th and early 20th centuries there had been over 1,000 German-language newspapers in America, but, faced with a stark question of loyalty in the wake of America's entry into World War I, the vast



The day after Pearl Harbor, a Japanese American store owner in Oakland, California, put this sign on his shop. It did not do him much good majority of German Americans opted for America. Following the end of World War I, there was continued immigration from Germany to America so that, by the start of World War II, there were 1.2 million German-born Americans, and no less than 5 million had both parents born in Germany. Following its rise to power in the 1930s, the Nazi Party tried to recruit German Americans to its cause, with a notable lack of success.

As for Italian Americans, they were probably the single largest ethnic group in the United States, although the vast majority could not be classified as 'alien enemies' under the terms of the Alien Enemies Act through either being born in America or becoming US citizens.

In comparison, there were far fewer Japanese Americans living in the United States at the outbreak of war. Outside Hawaii, there were only 127,000 Japanese Americans. Of these, 80,000 were Nisei – American-born of Japanese descent who were therefore American citizens. The rest were Issei – born in Japan before moving to America.

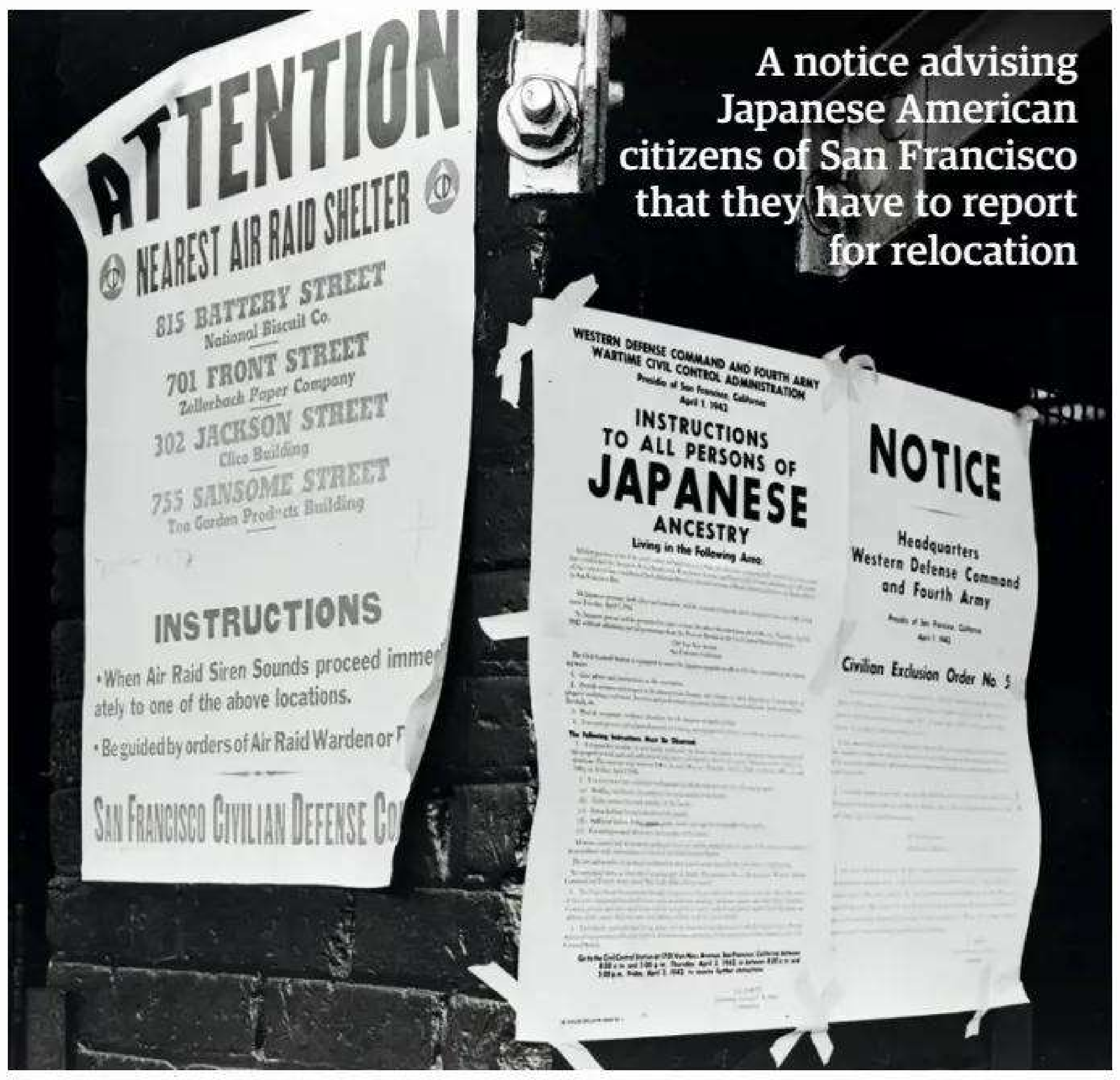
So, what to do about these 'alien enemies' once the United States found itself at war against Germany, Italy and Japan? The sheer numbers of German Americans made it impractical to do anything other than screen the population for known Nazi sympathisers and agents. Through the course of the war, 11,507 German Americans were detained. As for Italian Americans, only 1,881 were imprisoned during the conflict.

> "Japanese Americans, a smaller, more recently arrived and therefore less established immigrant group, had to contend with a long history of anti-asian prejudice"

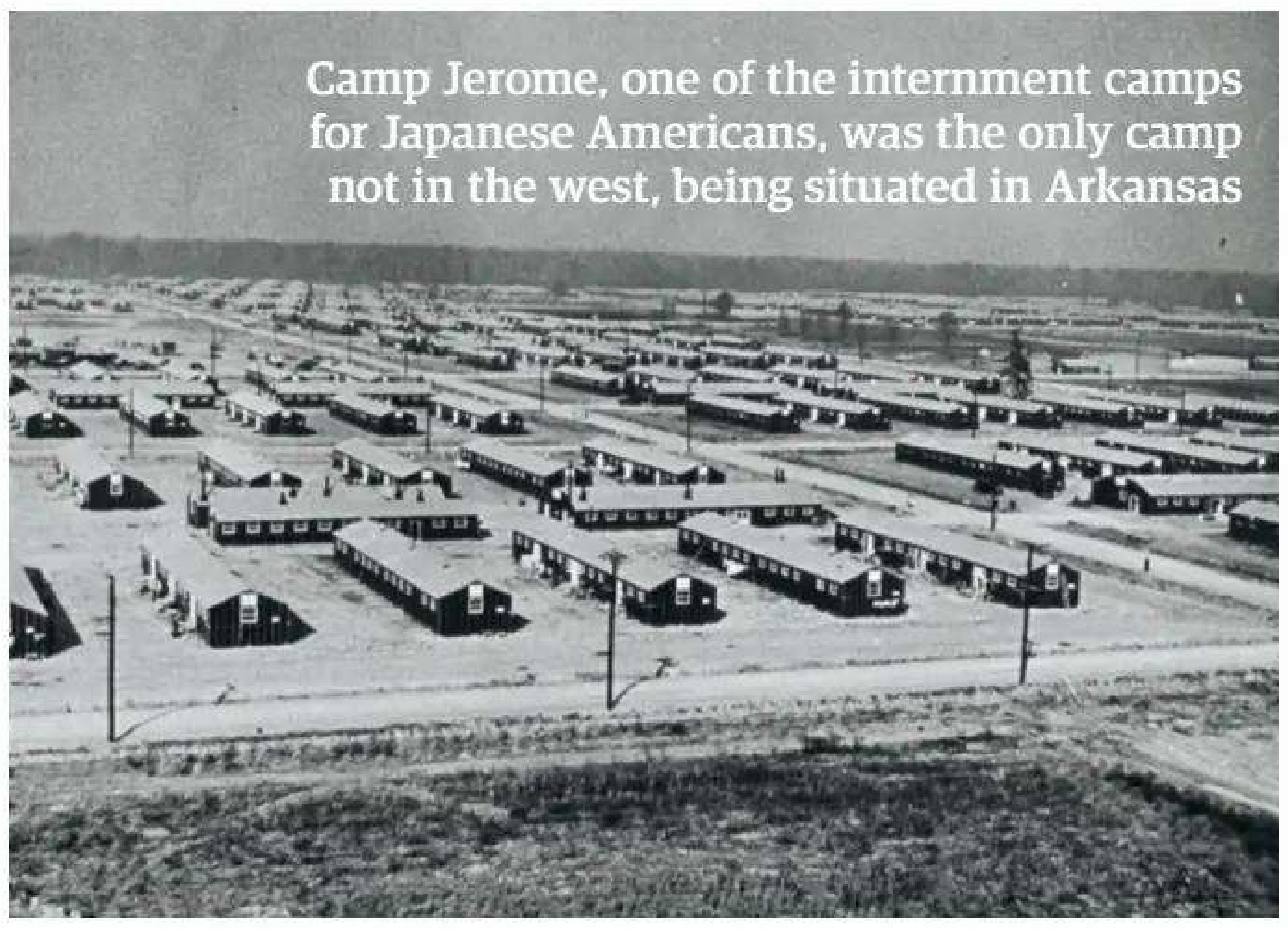
It was very different for Japanese Americans. A smaller, more recently arrived and therefore less established immigrant group, they also had to contend with a long history of anti-Asian prejudice in America that had previously been mainly directed against Chinese immigrants. What's more, the Japanese had started the war, attacking Pearl Harbor in what quickly came to be thought of as an underhanded and treacherous manner. Although the initial reaction was to support Japanese Americans as good and loyal citizens, within two months of the attack public nerves started to fray. With the perfidy of the Japanese being constantly emphasised in newspapers and reports, and elements of the military, particularly John DeWitt, who commanded the American army protecting the Pacific Coast, raising somewhat paranoid concerns about Japanese fifth columnists, it was only a matter of time before the possibility of detaining Japanese 'enemy aliens' was raised.

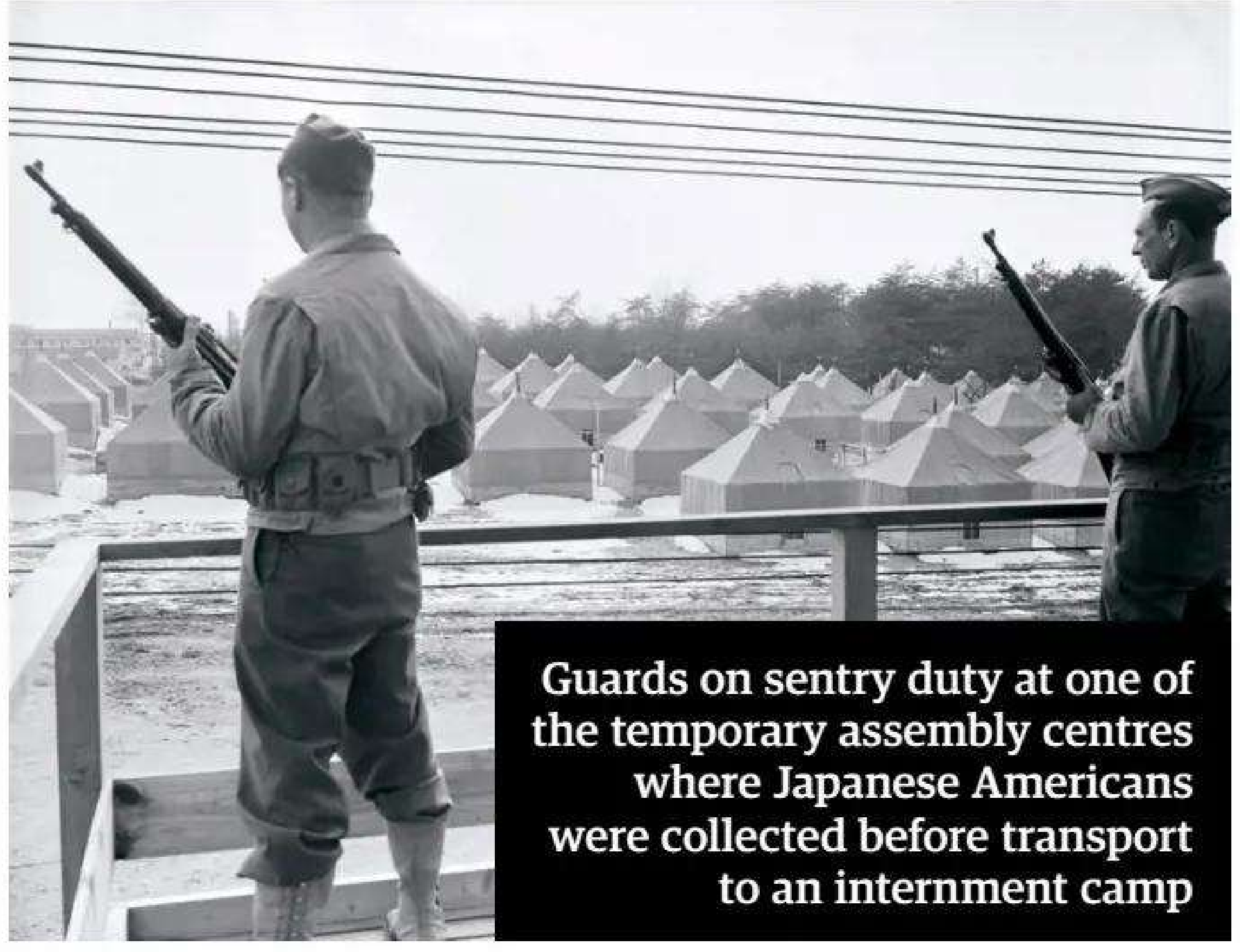
So far as General DeWitt was concerned, there was only one appropriate course of action. "A Jap's a Jap," he told newspapers, and the general went on

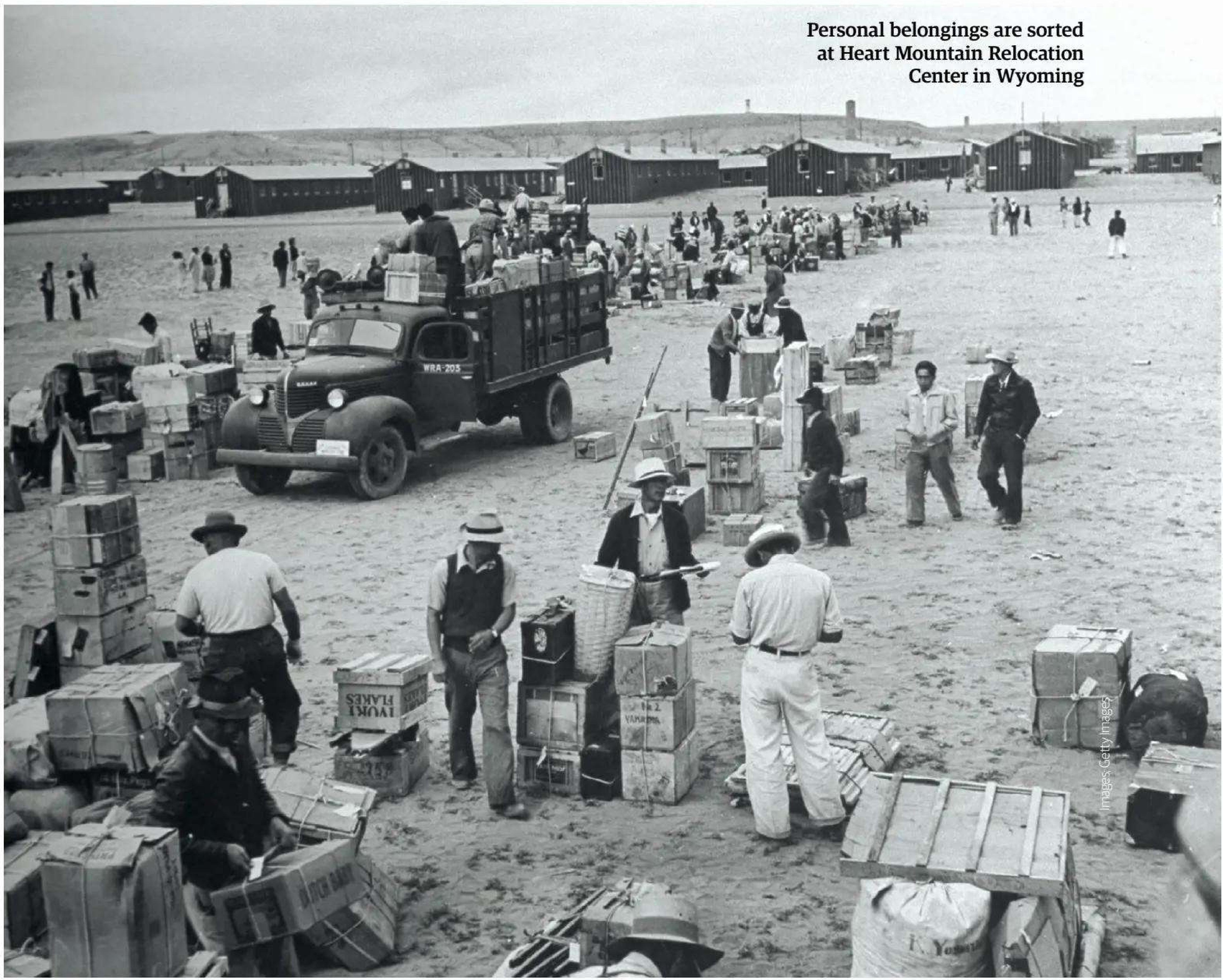
Despite basic facilities, the Japanese American internees kept their camps immaculate



A notice advising Japanese American citizens of San Francisco that they have to report for relocation

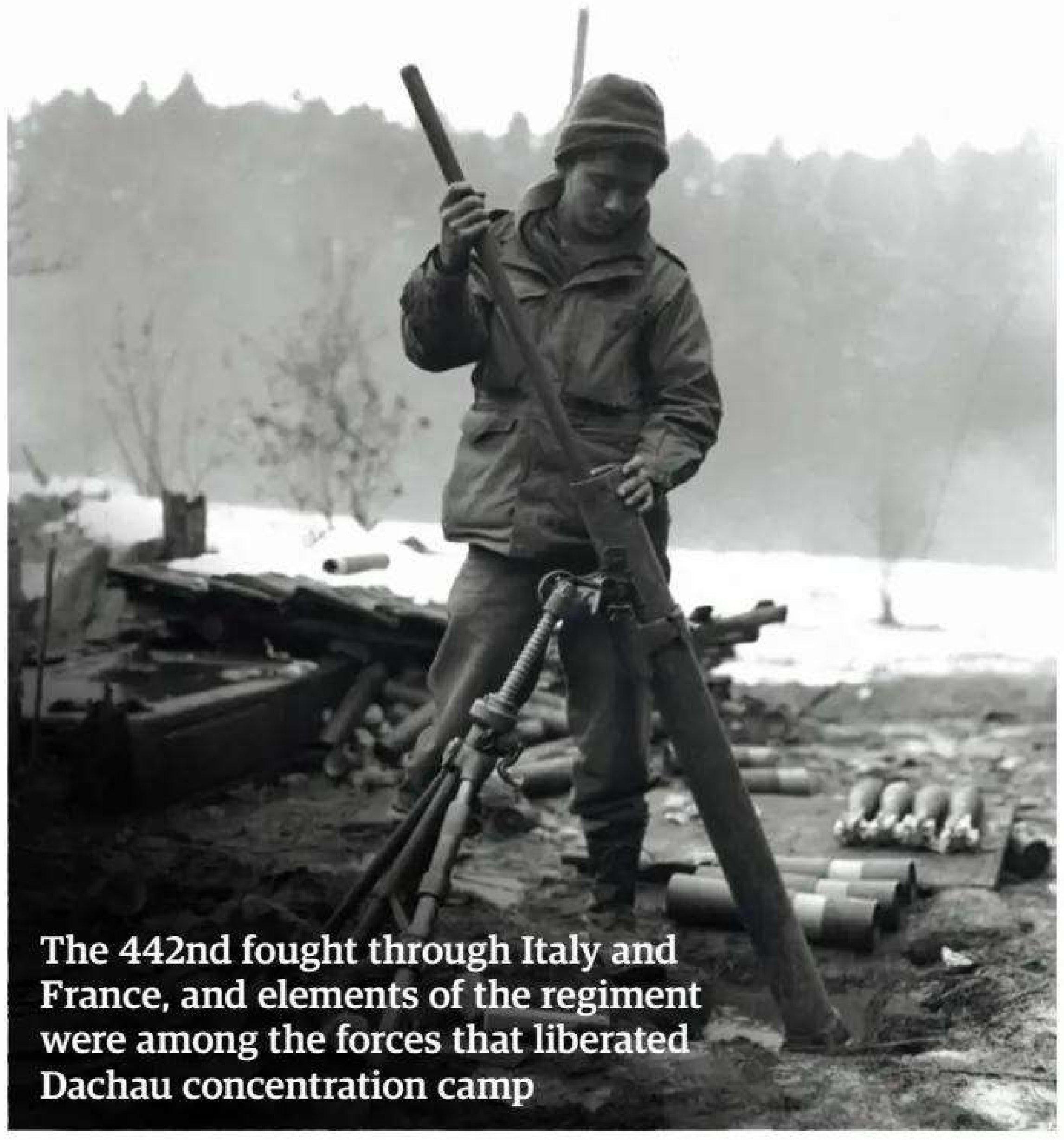

Camp Jerome, one of the internment camps for Japanese Americans, was the only camp not in the west, being situated in Arkansas


Guards on sentry duty at one of the temporary assembly centres where Japanese Americans were collected before transport to an internment camp



Personal belongings are sorted at Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming

Images: Getty Images


The 442nd fought through Italy and France, and elements of the regiment were among the forces that liberated Dachau concentration camp

to testify to that effect to Congress. In response, in early February 1942 President Roosevelt authorised the creation of 12 restricted zones on the Pacific Coast. Japanese Americans living in these zones were made subject to a night-time curfew. On 19 February, Roosevelt expanded military authority so that the army could bar suspected persons from these areas. While Japanese Americans were not specifically named as the target for this action, it was clear that they were the people under suspicion. Finally, on 18 March 1942, the War Relocation Authority was established and told, according to Roosevelt's executive order, to "take all people of Japanese descent into custody, surround them with troops, prevent them from buying land, and return them to their former homes at the close of the war".

It did not take the War Relocation Authority long to act on its orders. On 31 March, just 13 days later, all Japanese Americans living along the Pacific Coast were ordered to report to stations for onward relocation. They had to sell their homes and their businesses – all of their hard-earned assets. Not surprisingly, unscrupulous people took advantage of the enforced fire sale, scooping up land and homes and cars at rock-bottom prices. And even though the Nisei were, by definition, American citizens, they too were included in the round-up.

Having left their homes, Japanese American families were held in temporary assembly camps while the War Relocation Authority rushed to build ten internment camps, mainly in the western states of America, although two camps (later amalgamated into one) were set up in Arkansas.

The conditions in these internment camps were spartan. The camps were surrounded by barbed wire and the prisoners – for prisoners they were – were guarded. Although barren, the camps were at least run humanely. Even so, for three years, families of Japanese Americans had to live and bring up their children in what were essentially prison camps. Within the camps, the internees worked

During the Battle for Monte Cassino, one platoon of the 100th battalion had only five survivors from 50 men

Go for broke

The most decorated unit in American military history was manned by Japanese Americans

While mainland Japanese Americans were interned in camps, those in Hawaii, who made up nearly one-third of the population, were not. Unable to serve in the military, Hawaiian Japanese Americans formed the Varsity Victory Volunteers, committing themselves to the service of the war effort wherever the military might have the most use for them. Their service was rewarded when the War Department announced the formation of an all-Nisei regiment. 10,000 Japanese Americans volunteered, although only 1,182 of these were from the mainland (since most of the mainlanders were living in internment camps, this is perhaps not surprising).

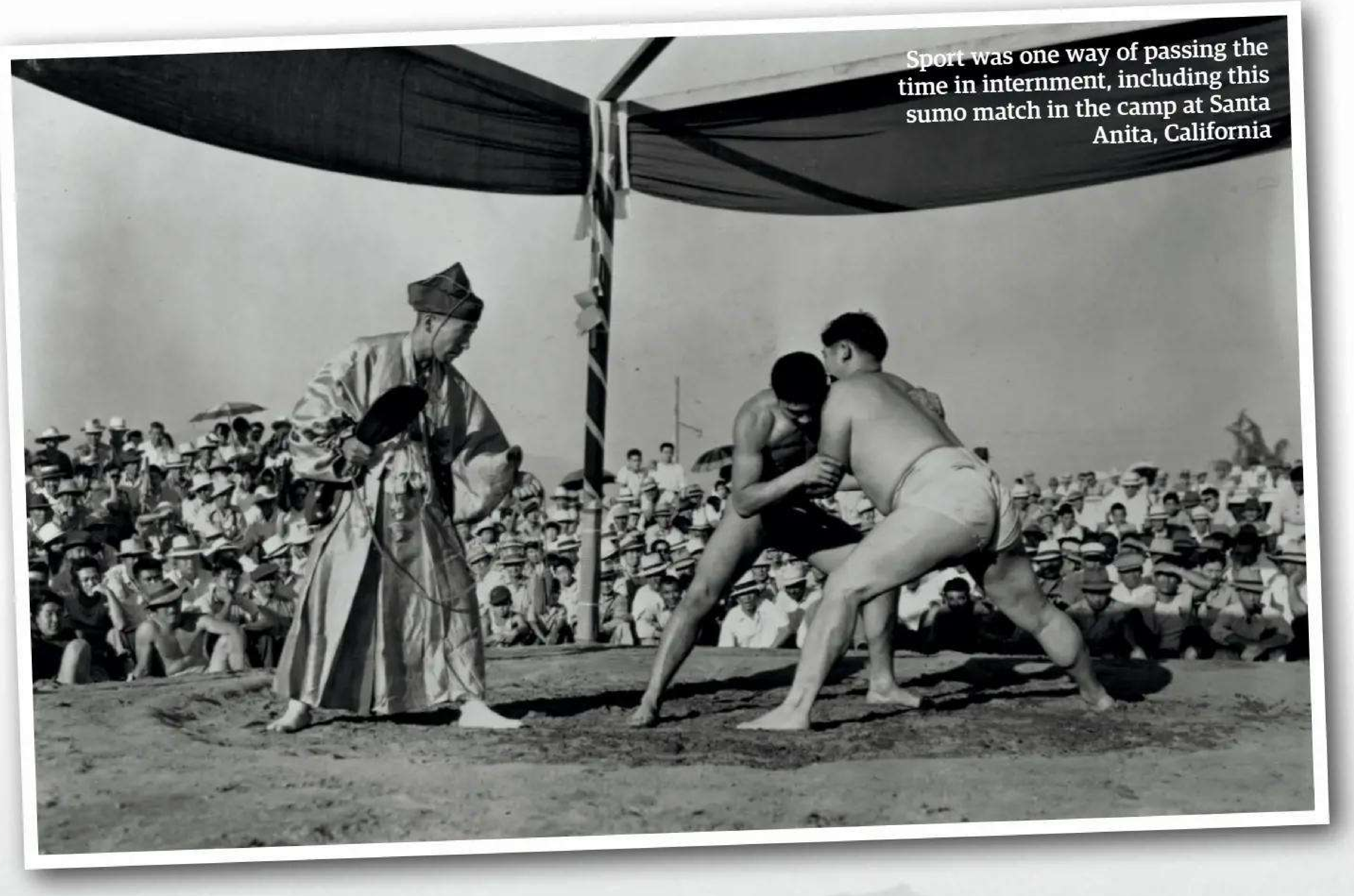
The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was formed on 1 February 1943, with the majority of its recruits from Hawaii. The islanders and the mainlanders, who nicknamed each other 'Buddhaheads' and 'Kotonks' respectively, were soon at loggerheads, disputes erupting into fist fights, such that the whole future of the regiment was called into question. It was only when the islanders were taken to visit an internment camp that the disputes ended: the Hawaiians understood the strain the Kotonks were under and expressed deep empathy for their brothers-in-arms.

The first element of the 442nd deployed into combat was the 100th battalion, which sailed to North Africa, arriving on 2 September 1943. The 100th took part in the invasion of Italy, serving with courage and distinction through the long and bloody fighting up the Italian Peninsula. So many men were wounded in combat that the 100th received the nickname the 'Purple Hearts Battalion' (the Purple Heart being a US army military honour given to those wounded or killed in action). The 100th took heavy casualties in the battle for Monte Cassino. The rest of the 442nd arrived in Italy on 28 May 1944. Throughout the rest of the war the combined regiment of Japanese Americans became, for its size, the most decorated regiment in American history. Not much doubt whose side these Nisei were on.

hard to make life as normal as possible in their straitened circumstances. They started and ran schools, they established churches and newspapers, and they kept everything sparklingly clean despite the relentless sand and dust that blew constantly through the camps (many had been set up in arid and semi-arid areas).

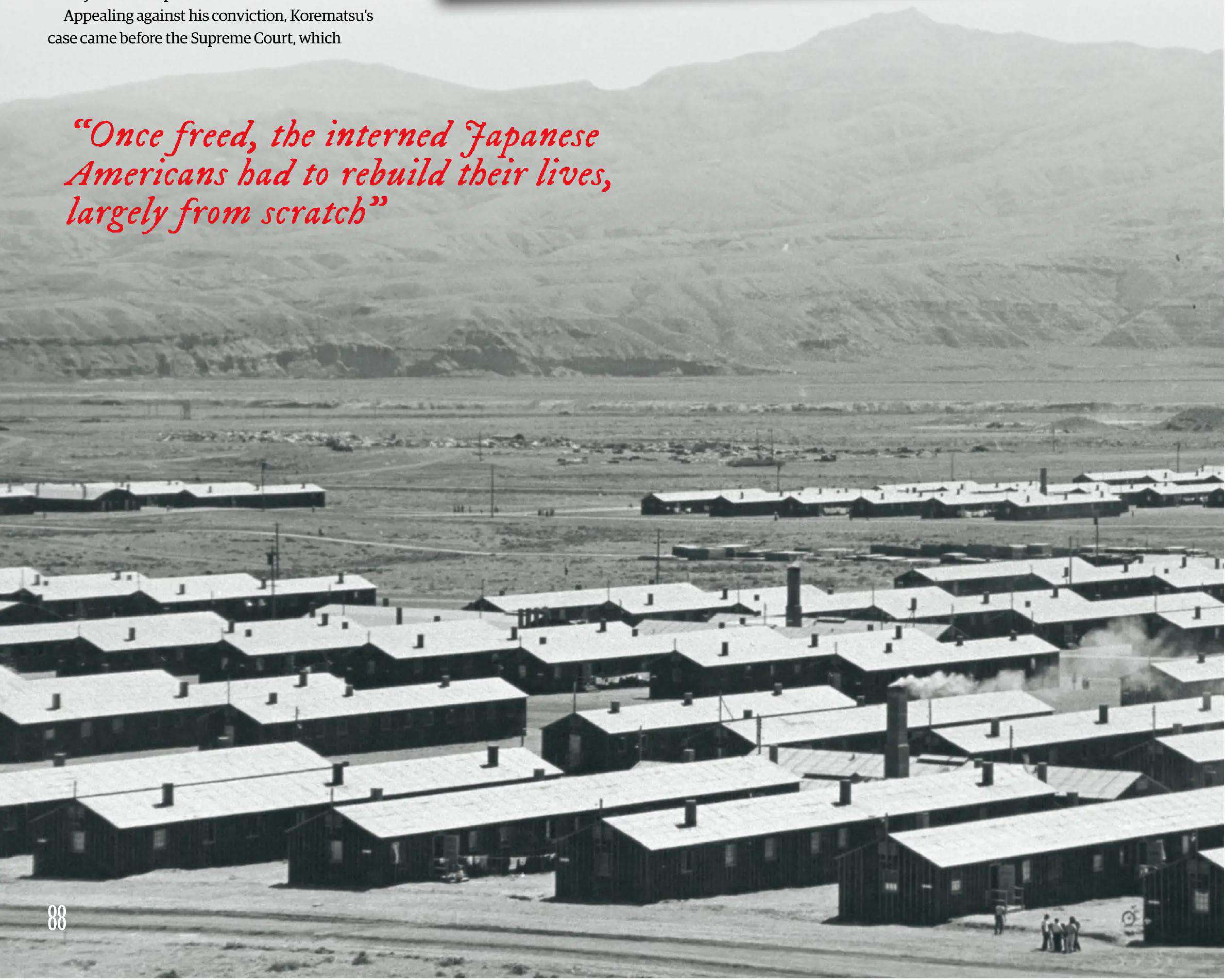
However, while the Japanese Americans went without violence into their captivity, this did not mean that they were content with being singled out as un-American. In particular, legal challenges were mounted to the president's executive order that culminated in the Supreme Court hearing the case of Korematsu vs United States. Fred Korematsu was a Nisei, a son of Japanese immigrants born in Oakland, California. When his family reported for relocation, Korematsu refused to go with them, eventually being arrested on 30 May. He was then sentenced to five years' probation and joined his family at the camp in Utah.

Appealing against his conviction, Korematsu's case came before the Supreme Court, which



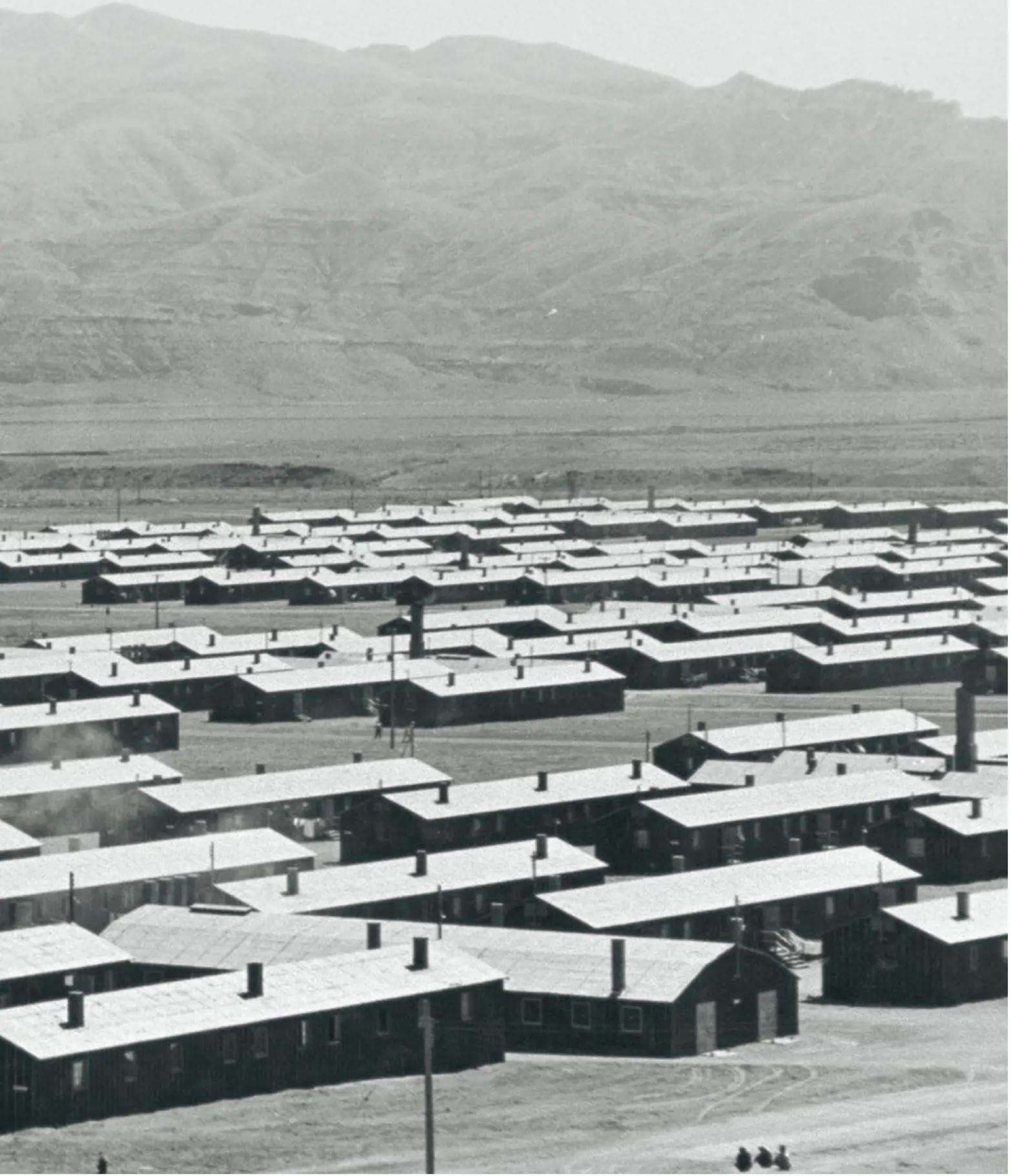
Sport was one way of passing the time in internment, including this sumo match in the camp at Santa Anita, California

"Once freed, the interned Japanese Americans had to rebuild their lives, largely from scratch"



Despite the straitened circumstances, Japanese-American families strove to maintain family life and educate their children

Heart Mountain Center in Wyoming. All the camps were in bleak and lonely surroundings



rendered its judgement on 18 December 1944. The court decided 6-3 in favour of the United States Government, holding that Korematsu's conviction was legal. The majority opinion, as voiced by Justice Hugo Black, stated that, "Compulsory exclusion of large groups of citizens from their homes, except under circumstances of direst emergency and peril, is inconsistent with our basic governmental institutions. But when, under conditions of modern warfare, our shores are threatened by hostile forces, the power to protect must be commensurate with the threatened danger."

This assessment could be summed up by saying that rights are all very well and good, but when we are all threatened then it might be necessary for some to be singled out due to their racial profile.

The dissent against this ruling, in particular Justice Robert Jackson's resistance, was eloquent and has been judged by history to be true. He said, "No claim is made that he [Korematsu] is not loyal to this country. There is no suggestion that, apart from the matter involved here, he is not law-abiding and well disposed. Korematsu, however, has been convicted of an act not commonly a crime. It consists merely of being present in the state whereof he is a citizen, near the place where he was born, and where all his life he has lived."

While the case progressed through the courts, the US Government had been investigating its interned citizens, concluding that many were indeed loyal Americans. Some internees, duly certificated as loyal, were permitted to leave the camps. With the war in the Pacific running strongly in America's favour in 1944, the US Government officially announced on 18 December 1944 that it would close all of the camps by the end of the following year.

In the end, it was March 1946 by the time the last of the internment camps closed – although this last one housed high-security inmates who might plausibly have been of some risk to the American war effort (although many held here came to be regarded as suspect as a result of anger at the way they were being treated by their own government).

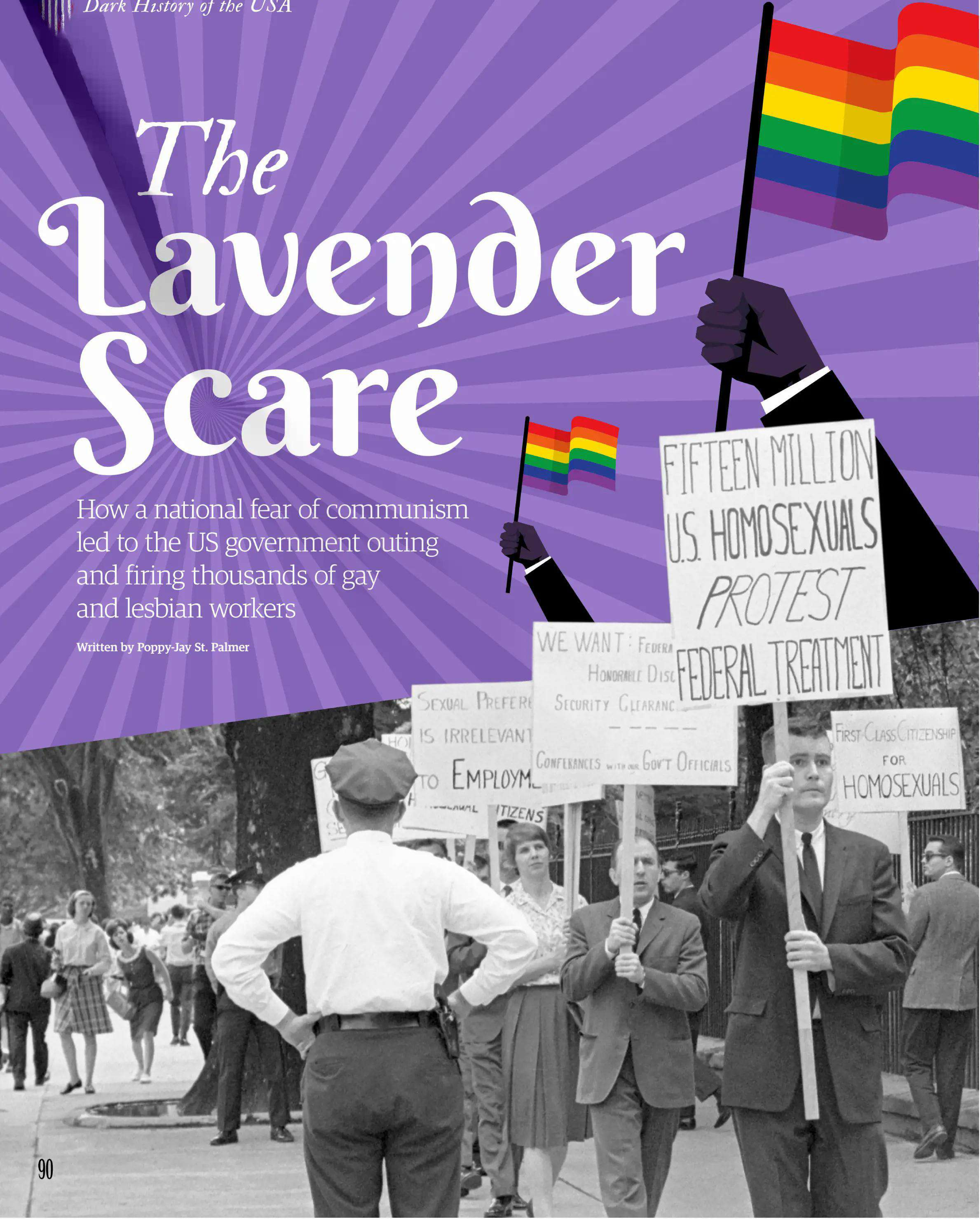
Once freed, the interned Japanese Americans had to rebuild their lives, largely from scratch. By the 1970s, the unjustness of the way they had been treated was beginning to be recognised. President Ford revoked the Executive Order that had led to the internment of Japanese Americans and apologised for the actions of his predecessor. In 1988, Congress passed a bill authorising the payment of $20,000 compensation to those surviving Japanese Americans, almost all of whom were loyal American citizens who had been unjustly imprisoned for three years. Yet even better than the money (to those who received it) was the official recognition that they had been treated unfairly by their own government. 43 long years after the camps had closed, they had finally been vindicated.

Images: Getty Images

The Lavender Scare

How a national fear of communism led to the US government outing and firing thousands of gay and lesbian workers

Written by Poppy-Jay St. Palmer


FIFTEEN MILLION U.S. HOMOSEXUALS PROTEST FEDERAL TREATMENT
WE WANT: FEDERA HONORABLE DISC SECURITY CLEARANC CONFERANCES WITH OUR GOV'T OFFICIALS
SEXUAL PREFERE IS IRRELEVANT TO EMPLOYME
FIRST CLASS CITIZENSHIP FOR HOMOSEXUALS
ITIZENS

Senator Joseph McCarthy facilitated a national moral panic in the US with his accusations of government workers being communists and homosexuals

WHITE HOUSE RE
REPLIES TO OUR L
--AFRAID OF U
Demonstration sponsored by
Mattachine Soc of Wash
P.O. BOX 1032
WASH, D.C. 20013
and
E.C.H.O.
East Coast Homophile Organizations

What's the difference between a communist and a homosexual? There is none – according to the United States government during the times of McCarthyism, at least.

You may have heard of the Second Red Scare, an era of US history shortly after World War II, which saw the nation gripped by an intense fear of communism. An onslaught of aggressive right-wing propaganda led citizens across the United States to become terrified of the idea of communism, anarchism and other left-wing ideologies. Following the mania of the first Red Scare that took place after World War I, the second entertained the idea that national and foreign communists were infiltrating the federal government to disrupt the American way of life. But with it came another moral panic that has largely been omitted from history.

Known as the Lavender Scare, the next campaign took aim at America's LGBTQIA+ community. Its title was in reference to the phrase 'lavender lads', a synonym for gay men that was repeatedly used by a prominent senator at the height of the scare, and 'lavender menace', used by infamous homophobe Anita Bryant to describe lesbians. Throughout the Lavender Scare, it was widely believed that homosexuals had infiltrated the US government and posed a grave threat to national security. A widespread panic ensued, and the government began harassing and firing those suspected to be LGBTQIA+ as a result.

The national reaction to the notion that homosexuals had infiltrated the government may seem unbelievable by today's standards, but it was the boiling point of a pot of fear that had been simmering for years. In February 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy gave a speech that chilled the nation to the bone: he claimed that he had a list of 205 names of Communist Party members who were working and shaping policies in the State Department. Even worse was the response that came from Deputy Under Secretary John Peurifoy. In a poor attempt to quell the panic, Peurifoy assured the committee that the department didn't employ any actual communists, but a number of people who had been considered security risks had already been forced out. Among them were 91 homosexuals. Many interpreted the admission as proof that the State Department had been infiltrated by 'sexual perverts'.

The revelation was met with even more fear, and the general view of LGBTQIA+ people in the United States was blown completely out of proportion. Communism was overshadowed by this new moral panic, with many believing homosexuals to be even more of a threat to security than the communists they had been clutching their pearls at just a few weeks before. Respected broadcaster Elmer Davis even commented on national radio: "It looks as if the

© Getty Images

American sexologist Alfred Kinsey's book, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, helped to bring LGBTQIA+ people into the public eye

MR.
COMMUNIST
RETURN TO
GOD & PEACE
STALIN
MUST ABOLISH
ANTI-ZIONIST
ANTI-SEMETIC
LAWS BEHIND
IRON CURTAIN

The Lavender Scare came at the same time as the Second Red Scare, which saw countless US citizens live in real fear of communism

> *"By November 1950, almost 600 civil servants had been dismissed in what some politicians described as the 'purge of the perverts'"*

enemies of the State Department, and of the administration generally, have gotten hold of a more profitable issue than communism."

Two years after the end of World War II in 1947, President Harry S Truman's administration attempted to strengthen the government in any way it could. The president passed an executive order establishing a loyalty programme for federal employees, meaning that anyone who could be seen as immoral or disgraceful became a target. However, the way in which the executive order was worded made it very clear who were intended as the targets. Gay and lesbian employees were singled out and treated as a threat to the wellbeing of the United States, despite there being no evidence to support this theory. The Secretary of State issued a memo stating: "The tendency towards character weaknesses has led us to the conclusion that the known homosexual is unsuited for employment in the department."

One of the first rounds of dismissal initiatives came from the National Park Service the same year. The Park Police began what was crudely known as the 'Sex Perversion Elimination Program'. They started targeting gay men for arrest and intimidation, and even labelled them mentally ill. At this point, the arrests were very hush-hush compared to those that came after 1950, but the misinformation being spread about the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly gay men, was rife. And it was about to get worse.

Following McCarthy's infamous speech, the federal government found itself with a case of mass hysteria on its hands, and was now tasked with finding a way to save face. The solution? Firing those at the centre of the hubbub. Republican members of Congress already had concerns about gay and lesbian people working for the US government as early as 1947, during the onset of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and McCarthy's speech turned the pressure up even higher. By November 1950, almost 600 civil servants had been dismissed in what some politicians described as the 'purge of the perverts'. The State Department even began boasting that it was firing one homosexual per day, which was twice the rate at which they were getting rid of those suspected of political disloyalty.

Following McCarthy's initial speech, he continued to make passing references to "communists and queers" in his addresses for a time, but eventually dropped the subject, unsure of how to proceed or essentially investigate his own accusations. Some believe it was McCarthy's lack of involvement from thereon out that caused the Lavender Scare to be largely forgotten from United States history.

The US government already had a strained relationship with the LGBTQIA+ community. Sodomy laws had been in place in the country since the 1600s, but they weren't particularly enforced and most didn't specifically target same-sex relationships. It wasn't until the 20th century that the US began to become more aware of the existence of LGBTQIA+ people – partly thanks to the publication of famed sexologist Alfred Kinsey's book *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* – and thus began to take sodomy laws more seriously. In addition to that, even more anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation was brought into law. Homosexual men were no longer allowed to serve in the military from 1941, and those suspected of being gay were served with 'blue discharges'.

Although McCarthy had backed off from the issue of homosexuals infiltrating the government, the damage was already done. His colleagues in the Senate formed committees to investigate the claims with even more gumption. The rate at which gay (or even suspected gay) employees

Politicians and police began targeting and harassing government workers who were suspected to be gay, as they were seen as a 'security risk'

GAY RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS
Will History Repeat Itself?
HITLER, McCARTHY, ANITA
Will History Repeat Itself?
HITLER, McCARTHY, ANITA

The damage done by McCarthyism and the Lavender Scare affected the United States' LGBTQIA+ community for decades

were being dismissed increased. Most of the concern around gay people working for the government came from the belief that they were more susceptible to Soviet blackmail, and were even more likely to be taken in by communist ideologies than the average heterosexual.

McCarthy had previously claimed that intelligence officials had informed him that "practically every active communist is twisted mentally or physically in some way." He ended up linking this to the LGBTQIA+ community because homosexuals were considered to be mentally ill or, as he personally put it, have "peculiar mental twists." A few individuals defended the gay employees being targeted by the government, like Secretary of State Dean Acheson, but most saw the dismissals as a positive move for the security of the country.

By 1995, more than 10,000 queer government employees had been outed, driven out of their jobs and left unemployed

Things came to a head in 1953 when the then-president Dwight D Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450, which barred homosexuals from working for the federal government. Hundreds of gay civil servants were forcibly outed and fired as a result. But it didn't stop there: many other employers followed the State Department's example, and thousands more were dismissed by private contractors and the military, leaving them jobless with their reputations tarnished. The press eventually lost interest in the stories – unlike the suspected communists, the gay civil servants didn't challenge their dismissals so the firings were far less dramatic and no longer a subject of interest to the general public. Instead, those affected continued to be systematically oppressed by the government quietly and privately, which did nothing to help the historical record of the Lavender Scare.

It wasn't until 1957, a decade after the first government employees were targeted, that someone finally stood up and fought back. After being dismissed as an astronomer from the US Army's Army Map Service, Franklin Edward Kameny formally appealed his firing. He lost the case, but the proceeding was the first known civil rights claim based on sexual orientation pursued in a US court. Kameny is now widely described as 'one of the most significant figures' in the American gay rights movement.

In all, the Lavender Scare lasted for more than two decades. The US government didn't officially stop using sexual orientation as grounds for dismissal or to deny employment until 1995, but by that time more than 10,000 queer government employees had been driven out of their jobs. They were left outed and unemployed, and their suffering barely made it to the history books.

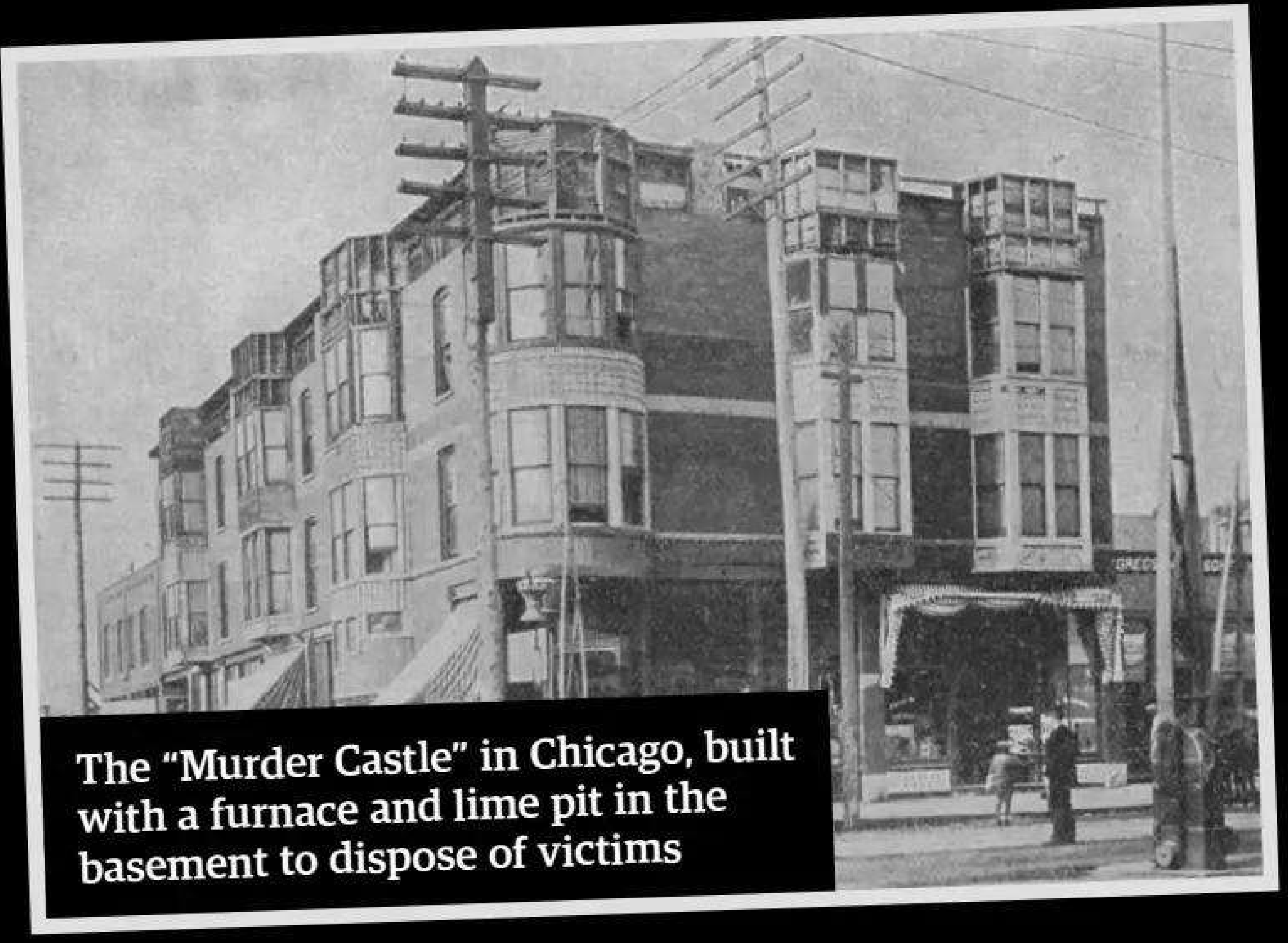
© Getty Images

HUNTING SEASON

Over 80 per cent of all known US serial killers were active from 1970-1990. Why was this the "golden age" for serial killers?

Written by Ben Biggs

There were no serial killers before 1973. Or at least, the term "serial killer" hadn't been officially coined by any policing authority, apart from the director of Berlin's Police force in 1930, who referred the blood-drinking "Vampire of Düsseldorf" Peter Kürten as a serienmörder – a "serial murderer". Of course, that's not to say serial killers didn't exist before the 1970s or that right-minded people weren't aware that they sometimes hid in their communities: they could be neighbours, parents, even children. All wolves in sheep's clothing. In fact, if we go back 500 years or more, folklore and serious crimes were directly linked by society at the time. Brutal murders and acts of cannibalism such as those German farmer Peter Stumpp was accused of, were often blamed on werewolves. It's safe to assume that in the centuries that pre-date police forces around the world, many serial killers were never caught, were never recorded or went completely undetected.



The "Murder Castle" in Chicago, built with a furnace and lime pit in the basement to dispose of victims

In the US, at least, detecting and even pre-empting the crimes of serial killers and violent criminals became significantly better with the scientific techniques of the FBI's internationally-renowned Behavioral Science Unit (BSU) in 1972. With law enforcement backed by pioneering methods deployed by the BSU, dots were connected and more serial killers were detected, arrested and convicted. Serial killers got more headlines and featured in the news more frequently – but there's a lot more to the perceived increase in the number of serial killers in the US in the 20-year than a simple chicken-and-egg situation. The US had been involved in three terrible wars in as many decades prior to the 1970s, and several generations of veterans had returned home with no help and little understanding of what effect the psychological trauma of the horrors they had witnessed had on them – or on their families. Violence begets violence, many veterans struggled to switch back to civilian life, and some were powder kegs that turned to drugs and alcohol to cope. A pre-teen Richard Ramirez was shown horrific photos of women that his older cousin, a Vienam war veteran, had raped and tortured during his time as a soldier. He later witnessed his cousin shoot his wife in her face, which had a profound effect on Ramirez, possibly the pivotal event in his formative years that pushed him down the path to becoming one of California's most feared serial killers.

Societal stressors could have also played a role in producing one of the most prolific periods of active serial killers in US history. This era was a time of enormous gender, economic and racial tumult, with negative emotions affecting people in different ways. Women were becoming increasingly independent, manifesting in them taking full time jobs and going out alone. Given that over 85 per cent of serial killers are male, this meant that there were more opportunities for these predators to kill. And since technology has advanced to the point that forensics can build a DNA profile out of a tiny speck of old biological evidence, we have got much better at stopping murderers before they kill again- and again. That's one theory, anyway. Another theory is that we actually got worse at detecting serial killers: just nine per cent of murders in the US were unsolved in 1965. This jumped to 24 per cent unsolved in 1983, although the total number of murders had doubled over this period. Fast-forward to 2022, and over 47 per cent of murders were unsolved, despite a small drop in the overall number of murders. If we're to put any stock in this theory, it's not that there are fewer serial killers today than there were 40 years ago, it's just that we're not hearing about them.

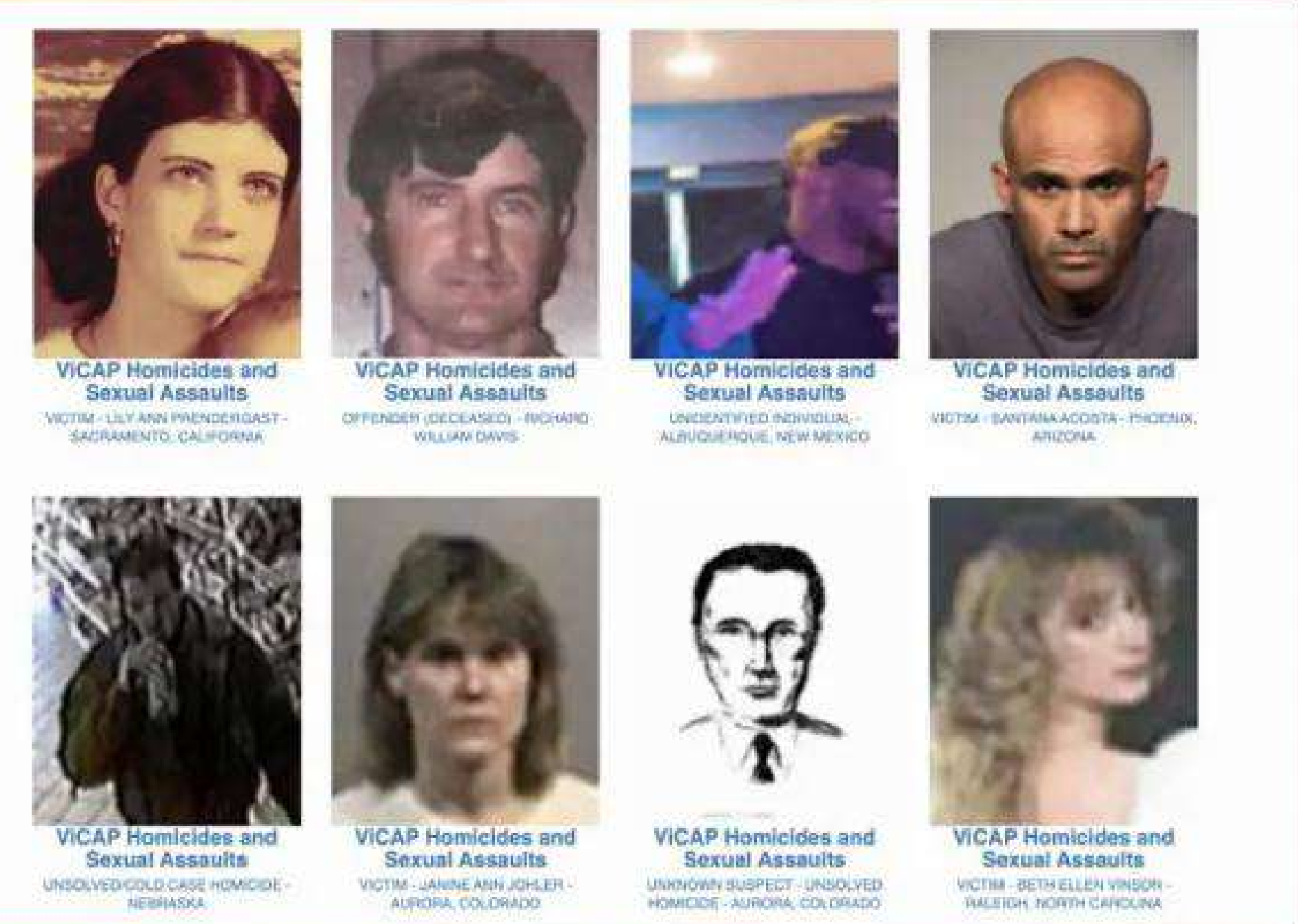
We've taken a look at a handful of the most infamous criminals of the "golden age" (a misnomer if ever we heard one) of serial killers, to understand how they were able to commit so many serious crimes before they were caught.

> The BSU is known as the Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) today, and profiles terrorists, kidnappers, school shooters and many other types of serious crime

Birth of the BSU

Mapping the minds of serial killers and career criminals

In the early 1970s, the planets aligned for John E Douglas, a young psychology graduate who had been recruited into the FBI. Sitting in the back seat of their pool car, an inveterate loan shark with mafia connections called Frank chatted freely. "I just don't understand it," said John's partner, "Every year it seems like we're arresting you… why do you do this stuff?" Frank shrugged, then said something that resonated with John. "We are who we are and you're not going to change us. You're not going to change our mindset and how we think." By the end of the decade, Douglas had risen in rank to FBI Supervisory Special Agent and was a respected member of the BSU. He had travelled across the US to high security prisons, visiting criminals incarcerated for the most serious offences, including serial murder. Using data from these interviews, which included details on the prisoners' motives and the ways they planned and executed their crimes, Douglas compiled a database of offenders that law enforcement was able to refer to in active cases. This was the foundation of the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) Database that the FBI uses today to track and monitor serial offenders.



ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
VICTIM - LILY ANN PRENDERGAST - SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
OFFENDER (DECEASED) - RICHARD WILLIAM DAVIS

ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
UNIDENTIFIED INDIVIDUAL - ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
VICTIM - SANTANA ACOSTA - PHOENIX, ARIZONA

ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
UNSOLVED/COLD CASE HOMICIDE - NEBRASKA

ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
VICTIM - JANINE ANN JOHLER - AURORA, COLORADO

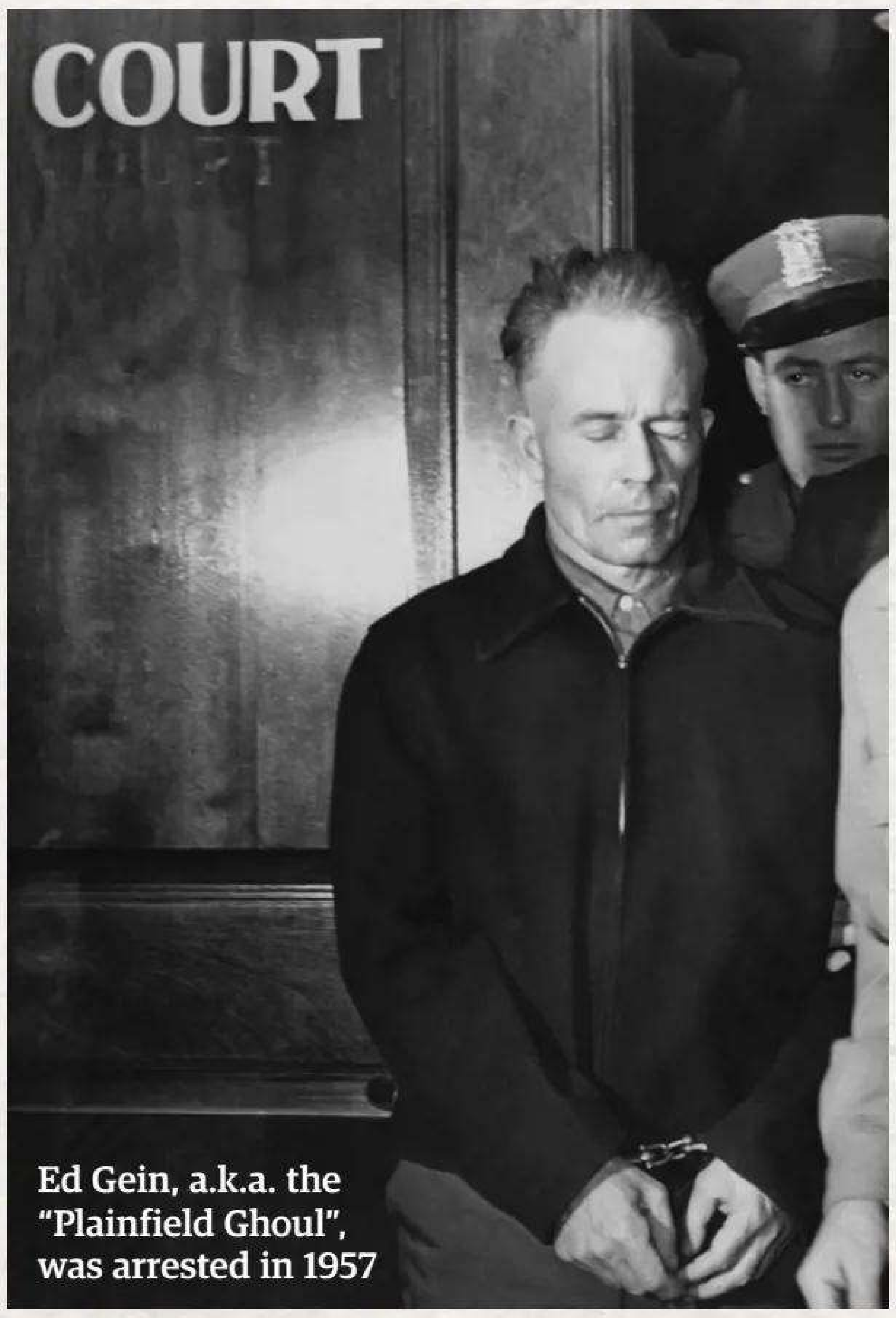
ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
UNKNOWN SUSPECT - UNSOLVED HOMICIDE - AURORA, COLORADO

ViCAP Homicides and Sexual Assaults
VICTIM - BETH ELLEN VINSON - RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

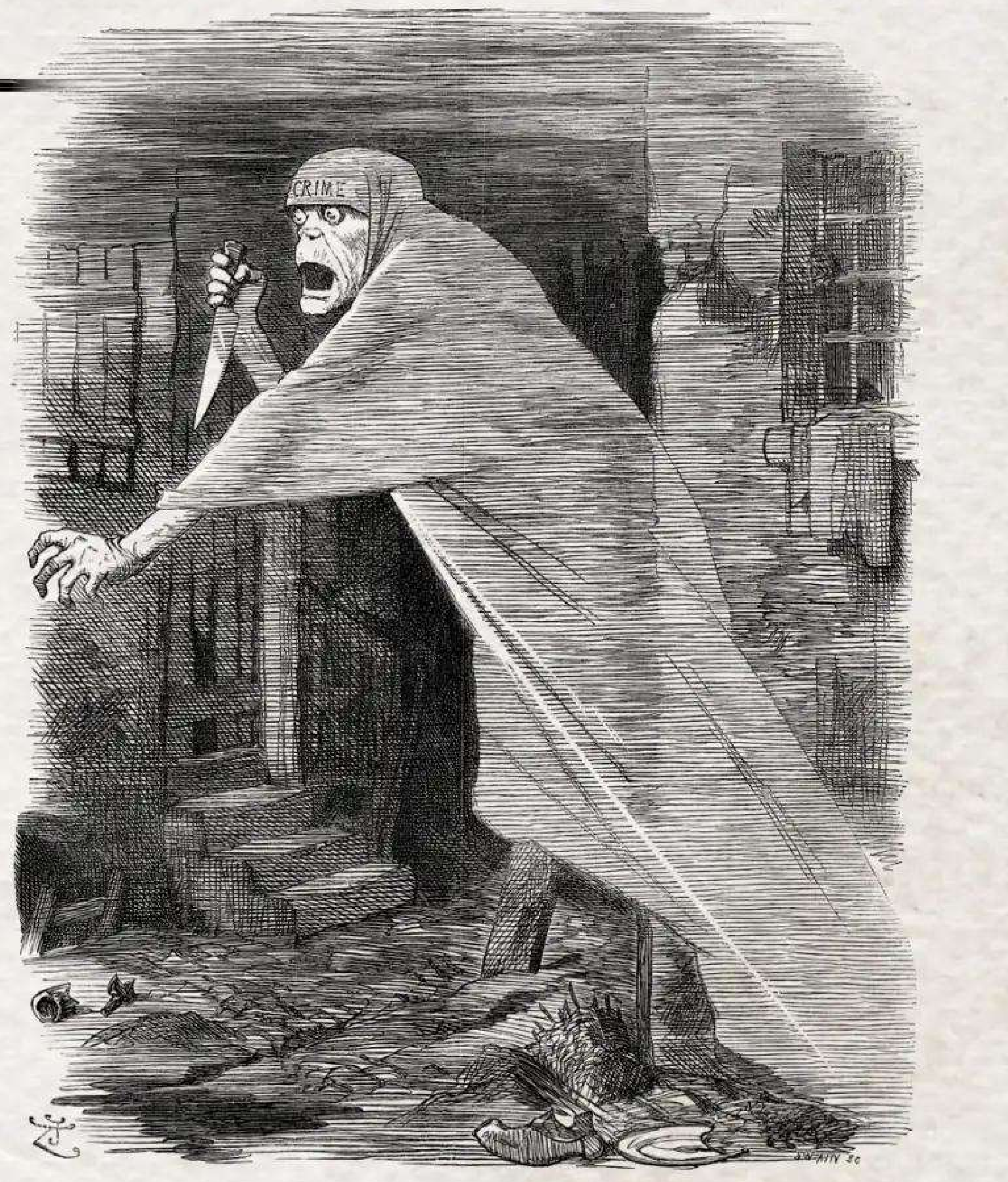
BOGEYMEN OF A BYGONE ERA

The term 'serial killer' might not have been used, but they still existed long before the 70s

Even in the decades before the formation of the FBI's BSU and the successful prosecution of its first serial killer case in 1973, serial killers were often little more than bogeymen in terms of scientific profiling. To this day, Jack the Ripper remains a demonic figure cloaked in the shadows of London's East End slums, no doubt an image perpetuated by *Punch* magazine's cartoons of the era. Similarly, the "Beast of Chicago" HH Holmes cuts a one-dimensional figure of evil in the retelling and embellishment of his crimes down the last century, while we know little about the "Plainfield Ghoul" Ed Gein beyond his sickening pastimes, apart from the fact that he was very much a loner. Despite their capacity for extreme violence and the blood on their hands, they were able to move in society, for the most part unnoticed.

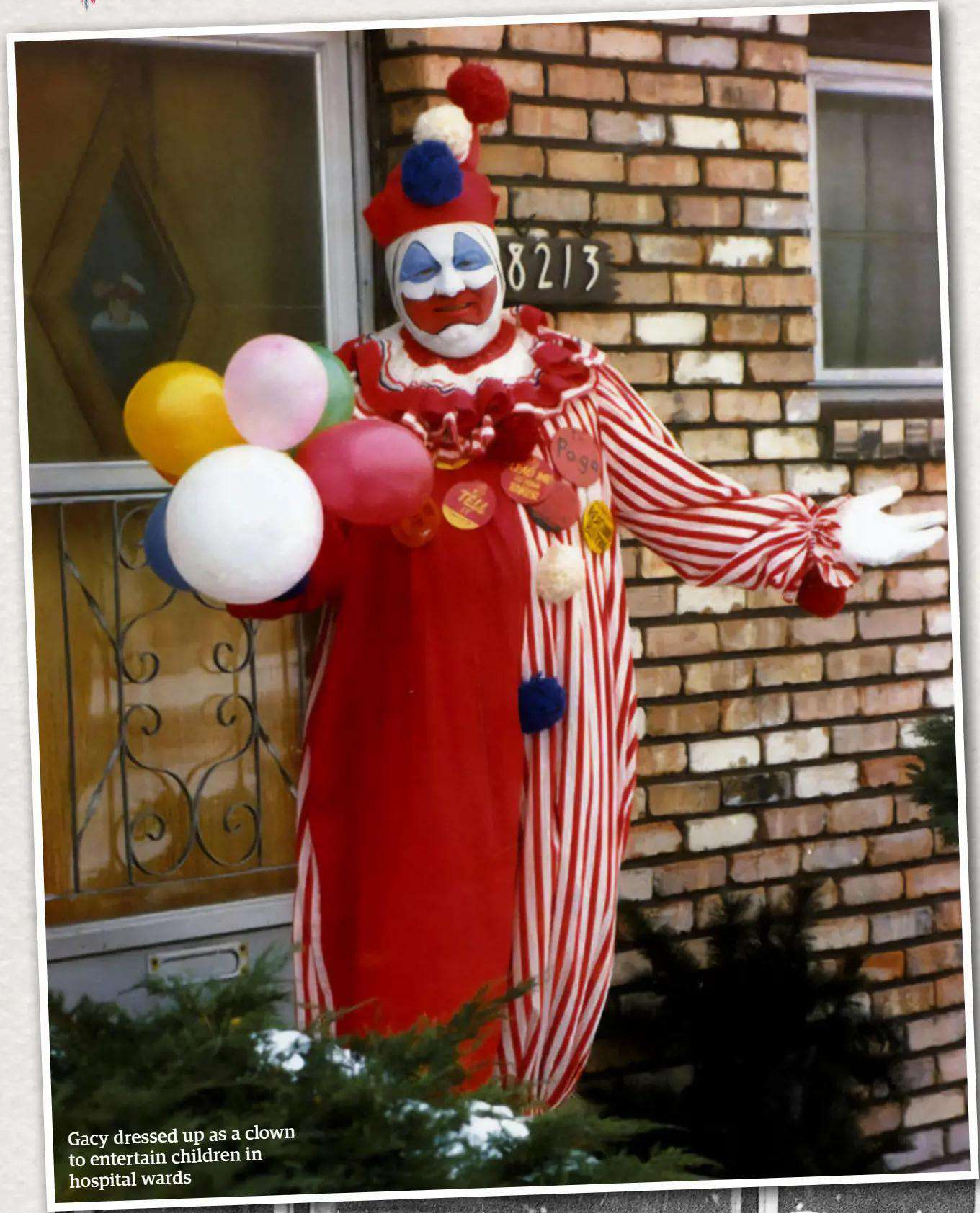


Ed Gein, a.k.a. the "Plainfield Ghoul", was arrested in 1957



A comic image of the "Nemesis of Neglect" suggesting that the reason why crimes like those of Jack The Ripper were rife in London's East End was because the area was so neglected

© Getty Images, FBI



Gacy dressed up as a clown to entertain children in hospital wards

KILLER CLOWN

John Wayne Gacy used his respectable persona to lure boys

John Wayne Gacy was able to rape, torture and murder at least 33 boys and young men inside his own home over a six-year period from 1972 to 1978, because of his veneer of respectability. As well as being a successful businessman, he was the vice-president of the Springfield Jaycees, a civic organisation that promoted leadership and management, organised charity events and would dress up as "Pogo the Clown" to entertain children in hospital. But you didn't have to dig too deep into Gacy's affairs to see that something wasn't right. Despite serving time in 1968 for oral sodomy on a 15-year-old boy and a violent attempt to convince the boy not to testify against him, he was able to recruit high school students for his construction company, PDM, of which the workforce was almost exclusively made up of teenagers. Gacy buried most of his victims in the ground beneath the crawl space under his house, and was only investigated properly in December 1978 after the disappearance of one of his recruits, Robert Piest. This, despite Gacy being reported for assault after abducting a teenager at gunpoint in January the same year and nearly drowning him in his bathtub: police dropped the charges against him after Gacy told them he had a consensual "sex slave" relationship with the boy.

> *"You didn't have to dig too deep into Gacy's affairs to see that something wasn't right"*

Gacy buried his young victims in the crawl space beneath his house

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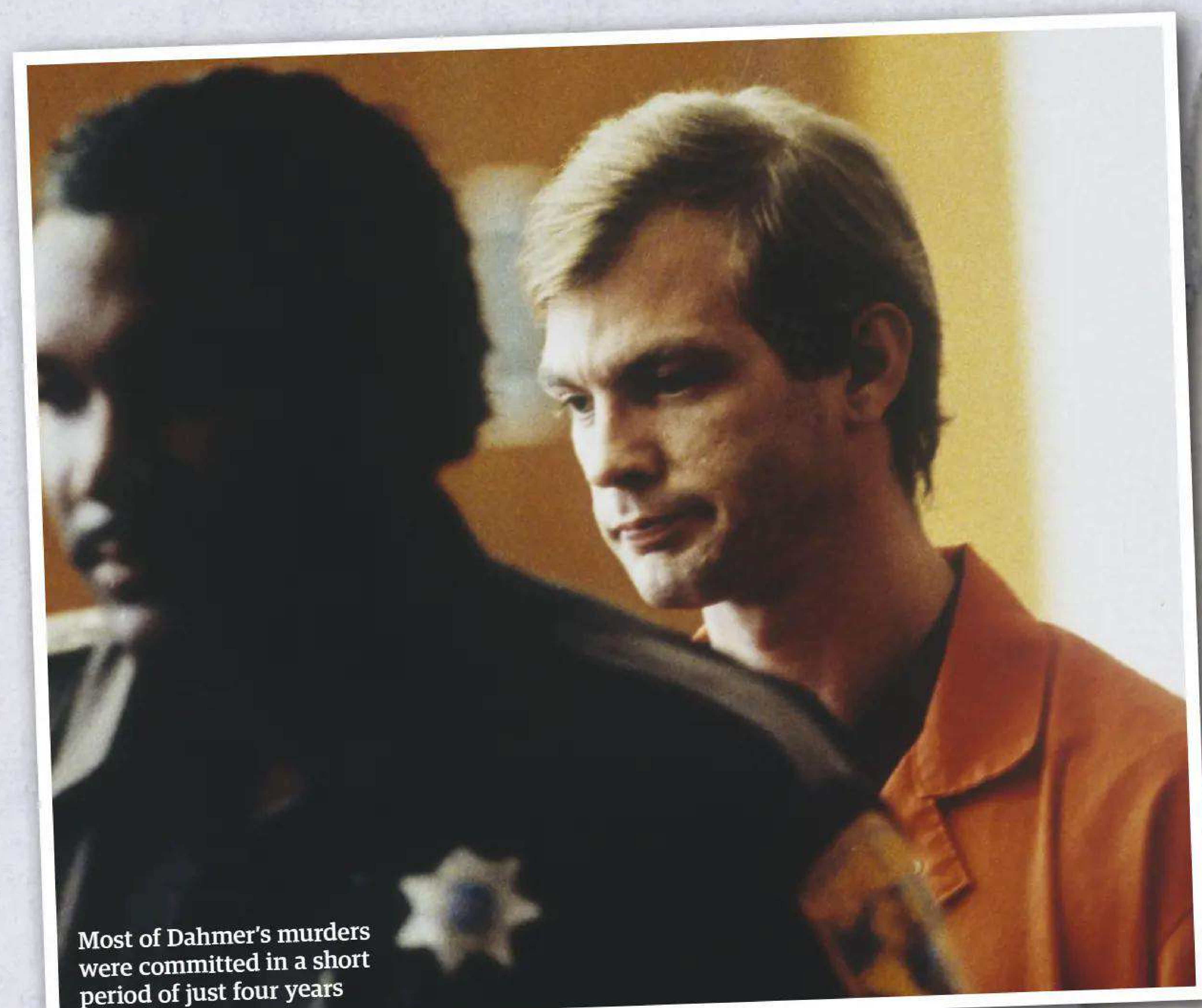
MILWAUKEE CANNIBAL

Jeffrey Dahmer went to great lengths to ensure his victims never left him

Much insight into the formative years of the cannibal killer Jeffrey Dahmer can be gleaned from his psychiatric evaluation by Dr Park Dietz, who gave expert testimony at the serial killer's 1992 trial as to whether Dahmer was certifiably insane, or criminally responsible for 16 murders, most of them over a four year period from 1987 to 1991. Dahmer was a loner in school, who enjoyed collecting and preserving dead animals, reportedly enjoying the sounds their bones made when they snapped and the glistening of their entrails. He abused hard alcohol in his teens and by the time he enlisted in the US Army, he was regularly becoming blackout drunk. He teetered on the edge of respectable society after his discharge from the Army, frequenting gay bathhouses and nightclubs, where he picked up many of his victims. Like in John Wayne Gacy's case, Milwaukee police dismissed the clear evidence of abuse in the case of one of Dahmer's victims, who was found naked, bleeding from his rectum and walking the street near Dahmer's apartment. Dahmer told the cops that the 14-year-old was his boyfriend and the boy had got drunk. The officers released the two and were later overheard saying that it was just an argument "between fags".

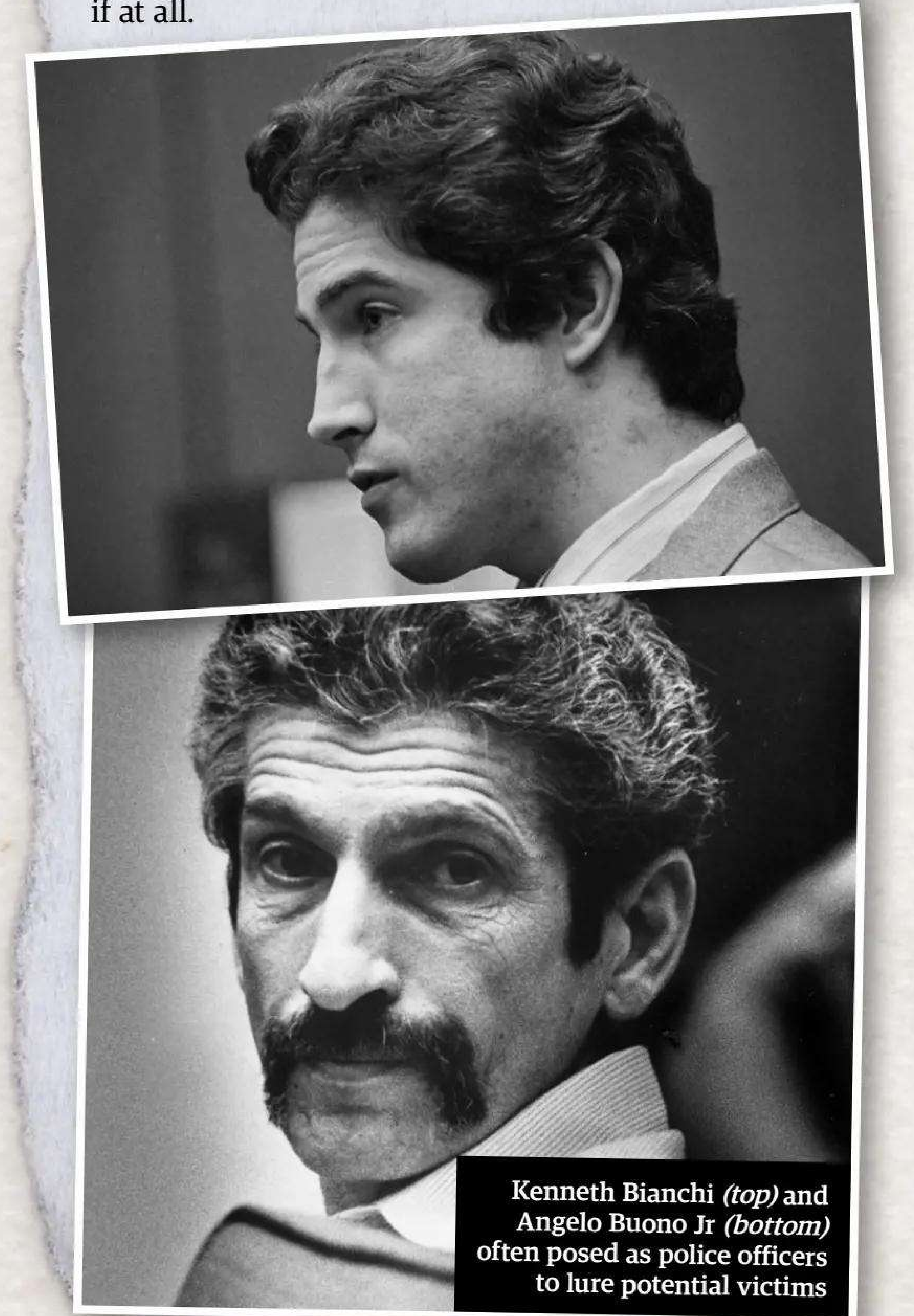

Most of Dahmer's murders were committed in a short period of just four years

© Getty Images, Alamy

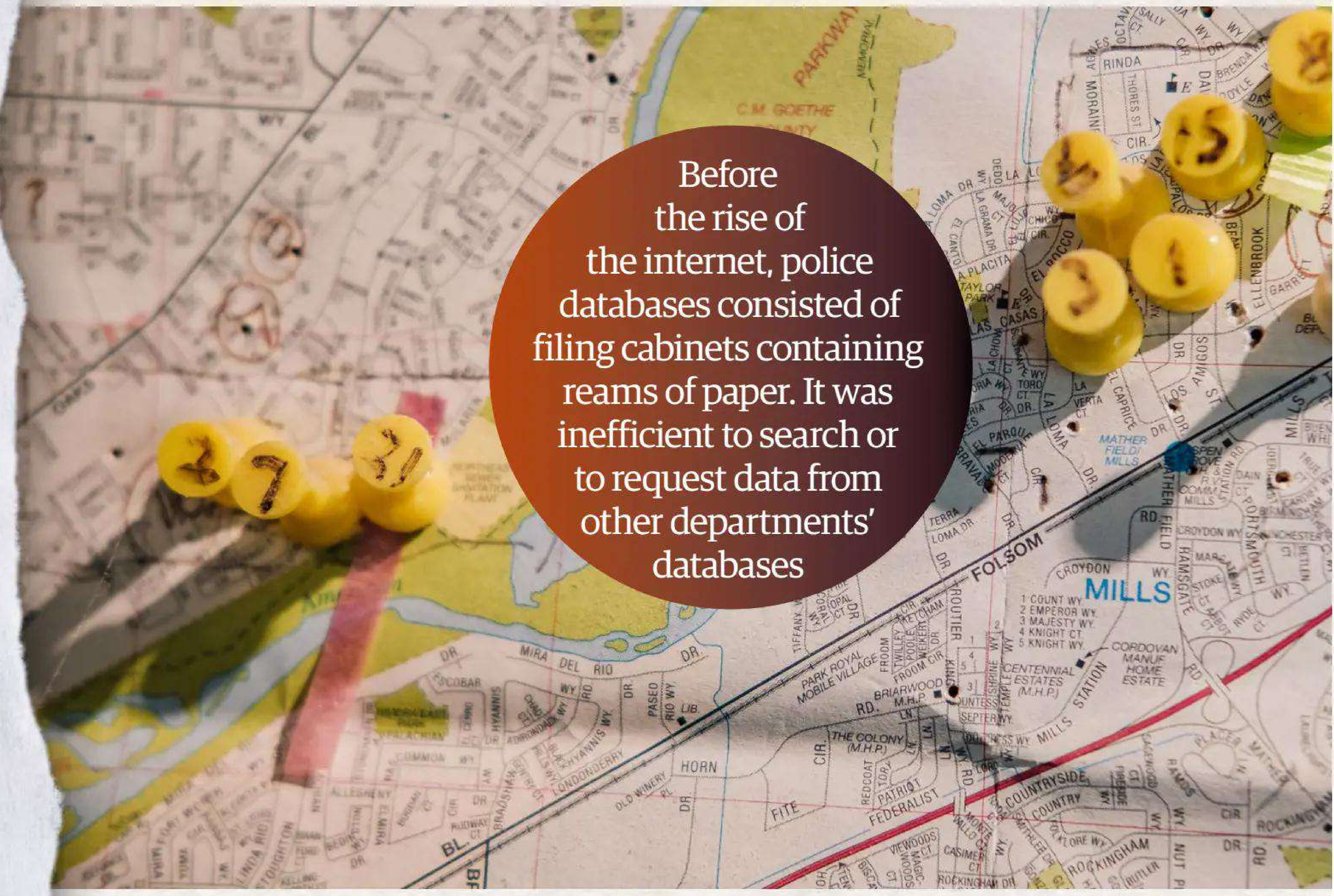
HILLSIDE STRANGLERS

Bianchi and Buono evaded capture for almost two years

One of the reasons why cousins Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono Jr weren't caught sooner, before they could kidnap, rape and murder a total of ten girls and young women in the Los Angeles area between October 1977 and February 1978, was because at first police assumed they were searching for one, not two killers. The news of two murdered sex workers didn't rouse much of a panic in the local area until they were linked with the discovery of four bodies, including two girls ages 12 and 14, in a single week. Then the whole of LA sat up and took notice, flooding the police tip line with potential leads. According to the former LAPD chief Daryl Gates, they had over "10,000 clues, 4,800 parolees to check out, and 120,000 fingerprint cards to run." Moreover, the competition, mistrust and even petty animosity between west coast agencies at the time meant that the investigation was haphazardly organised and vital case information was reluctantly shared, if at all.



Kenneth Bianchi *(top)* and Angelo Buono Jr *(bottom)* often posed as police officers to lure potential victims



Before the rise of the internet, police databases consisted of filing cabinets containing reams of paper. It was inefficient to search or to request data from other departments' databases

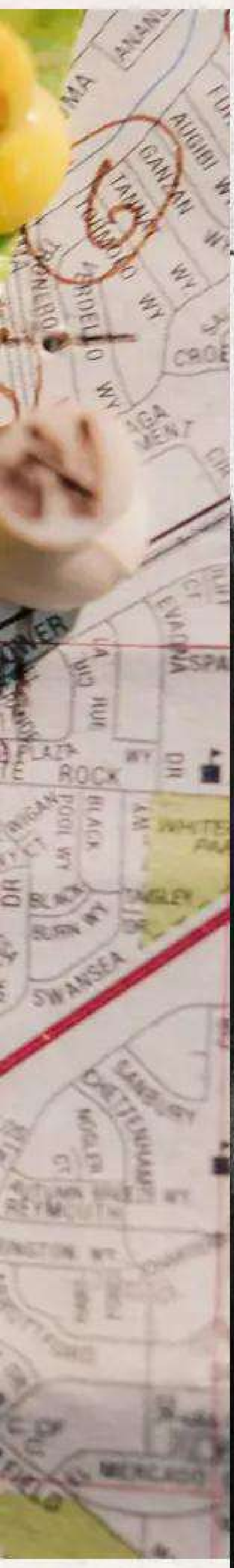
GOLDEN STATE KILLER

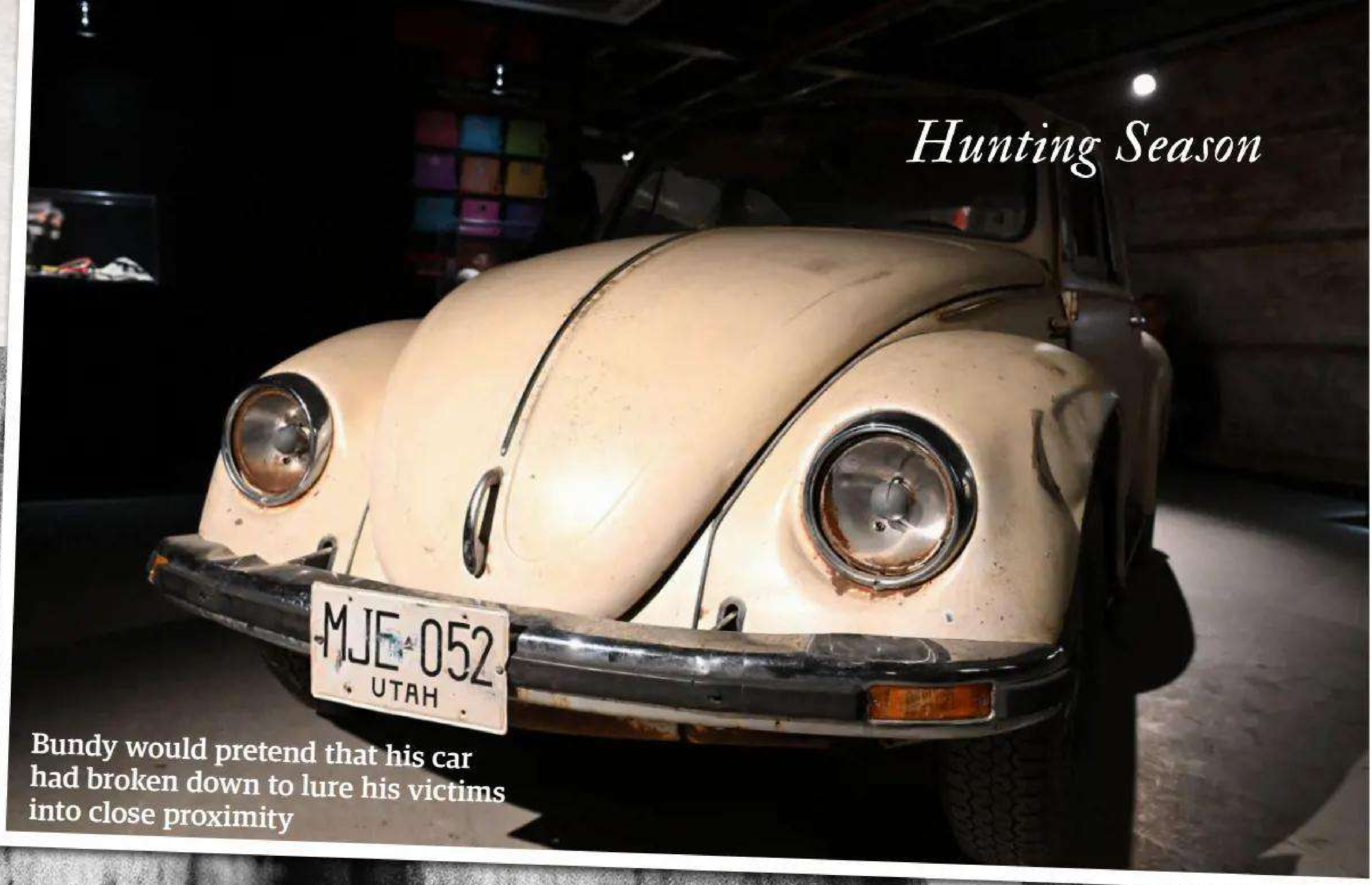
Joseph James D'Angelo walked free for over 30 years

Between 1970 and 1990, a large proportion of serial killer cases in the US went unsolved, partly because forensic technology like DNA testing didn't exist or was still in its infancy by the end of this period. That's why the arrest of 72-year-old Joseph James D'Angelo in 2018 and his subsequent conviction so significant: D'Angelo was arrested for for a string of break-ins, rapes and murders committed in California over the best part of a decade from 1979 to 1986, before the case went cold. He targeted quiet neighbourhoods with a modus operandi that involved stalking his victim before breaking into the homes and tying them up, a method that he developed using his training as a former burglary unit police officer. In 2017, detectives used the DNA taken from a rape kit on a consumer genealogy website, which linked a dozen or so people to the same ancestor from the 1800s as the Golden State Killer. Using the profile of the serial killer they already had, detectives were able to eliminate everyone but D'Angelo. A sample taken from a discarded tissue surreptitiously collected from D'Angelo's bin was a match for the killer's DNA.

D'Angelo used his police training to terrorise his victims

D'Angelo was finally arrested decades later at the age of 72





Bundy would pretend that his car had broken down to lure his victims into close proximity

Bundy was convicted of 20 murders though it's likely that his real body count is much higher

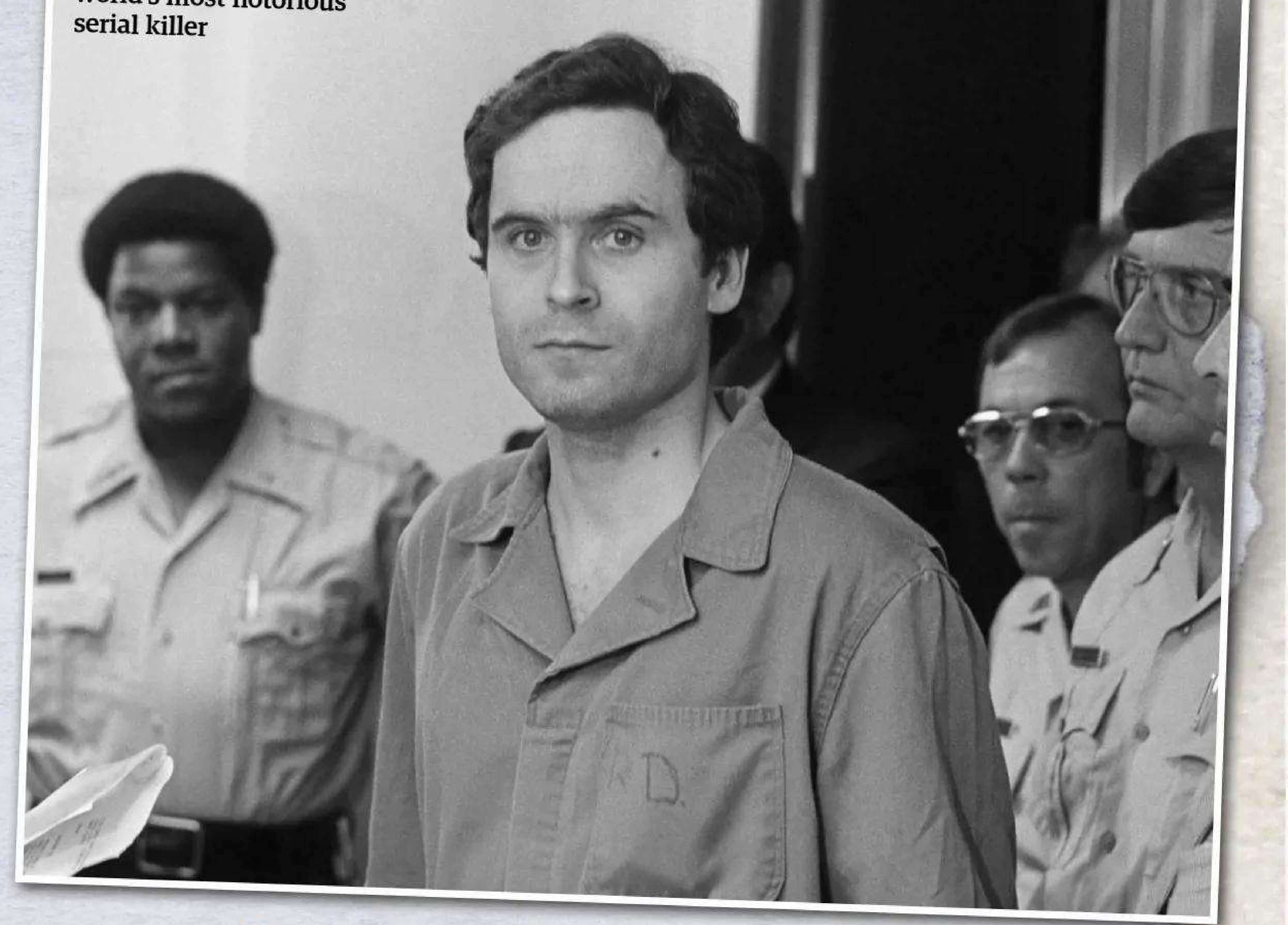
© Getty Images, Alamy

CAMPUS KILLER

Ted Bundy used his charismatic charms to capture college-aged women

As, arguably the most infamous serial killer in the world, Ted Bundy's name is even better known than his moniker, which was given to him because of his preference for picking his victims up around college campuses. Bundy was convicted of murdering 20 women between January 1974 and February 1978, though it's likely he killed many more than that. His modus operandi involved pretending his car had a breakdown or that he had injured himself somehow, pulling on the heartstrings of well-meaning women and lulling them into a false sense of security, so that he could get them into his car. The US hitchhiking culture was in full swing in the 1970s and people were more trusting or simply more willing to get into cars with strangers. Bundy famously escaped prison twice before he was finally recaptured in 1978. On his second escape, he was able to evade authorities and quickly make his way across the country to Florida in a stolen car because of the new interstate highways, whose construction had largely been completed by 1978. He was able to murder three more women while on the lam before he was arrested in the north of Florida.

Bundy is probably the world's most notorious serial killer



> *"The US hitchhiking culture was in full swing in the 1970s"*

AMERICAN GODS

Cults have shaped the landscape of America for centuries. Dramatic, dangerous, and insular, cults destroy lives, shatter communities, and even kill

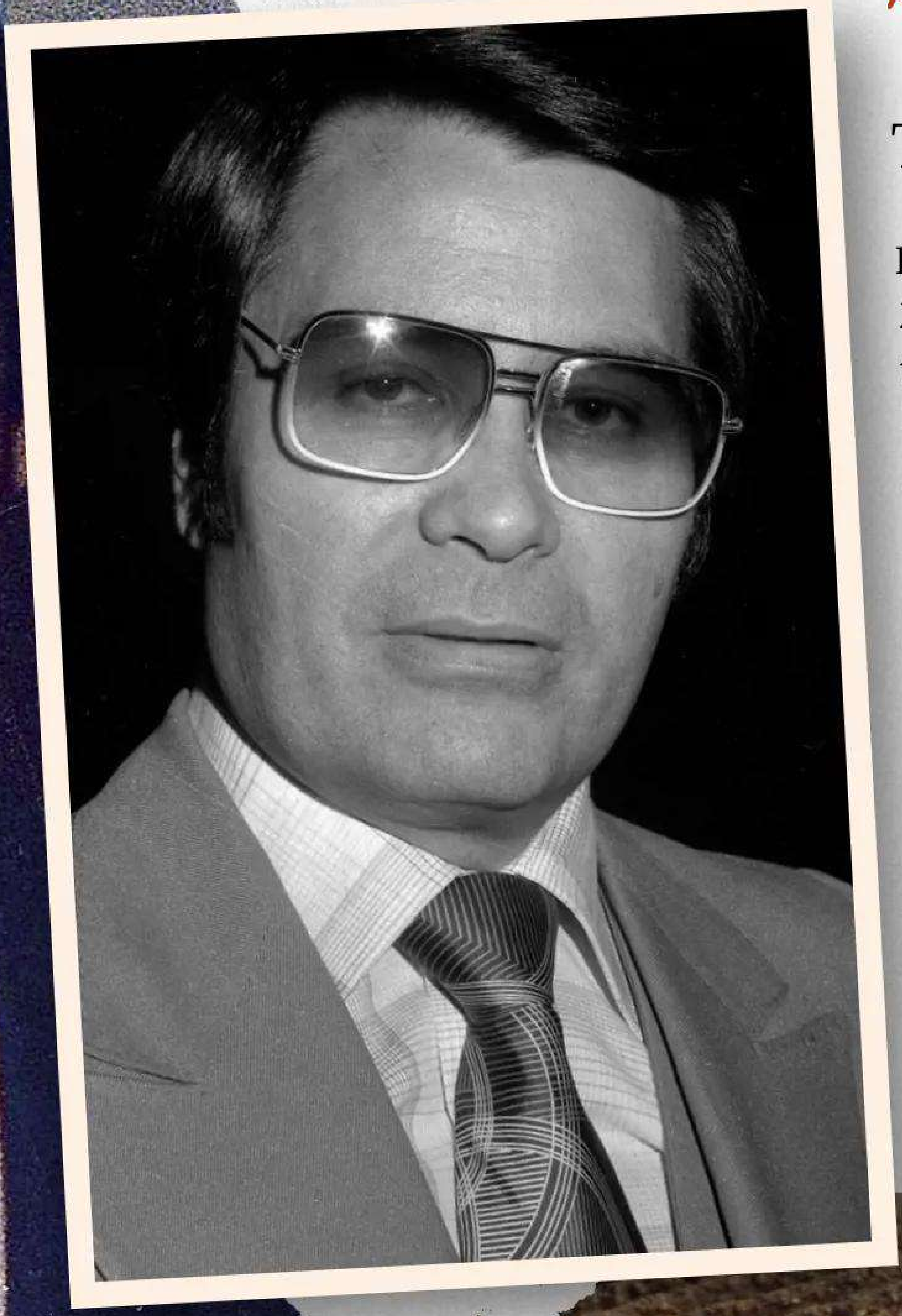
Written by Kate Cherrell, Alice Pattillo and Bee Ginger

Throughout history, cult leaders have garnered followings with simple messages of love, salvation, truth and community. Only when the member is truly indoctrinated, do cults reveal their true colours.

Cults are hard to define, and exist on a spectrum of severity, but can be broadly identified as a small group of people with unique or strange religious practices. Such groups often rely on excessive control in many forms to maintain order and devotion.

While they exist worldwide, America has a particularly long and messy relationship with cults. The USA is somewhat of a contradiction, being a developed country with high education levels, but boasting a high number of 'believers'. In global trends, countries with low education levels generally possess high levels of religiosity, making America something of an outlier. As such, the population is more open to both new spiritualities and the cultivation of well-educated, charismatic religious leaders.

It can be argued that America is not only a nation of cults, but was founded on cults. The first pilgrim settlers in America were regarded as radical separatists, and popularised religious secession, whereby new sects and beliefs separated from established churches, seeking to found their own interpretations of faith. However, where there is talk of faith, discussions of sex, power, and violence are never far behind.

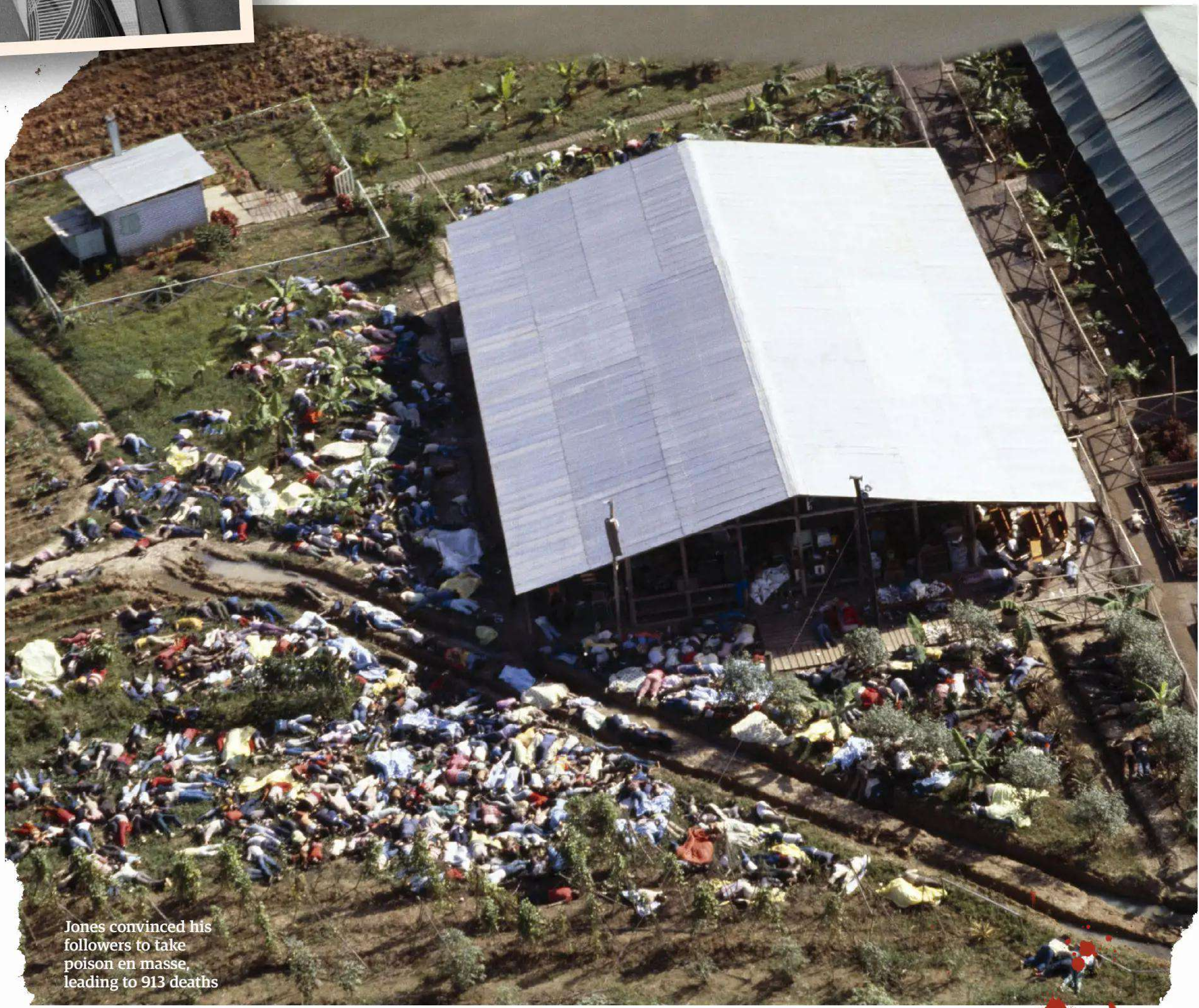


THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

This sect ended abruptly with a notorious massacre

Perhaps one of the most infamous cults of the 20th century, thanks to its horrifying ending, the People's Temple began its life in the 1950s as a Pentecostal Christian sect led by pastor Jim Jones. Jones garnered a huge audience as an evangelical preacher by promoting racial equality within his congregation at a time when American communities were still segregated, as well as claiming healing abilities. But his intentions were not virtuous. After allegedly receiving visions of a nuclear attack on the US, he encouraged his followers to relocate to Guyana, where he established a 27,000-acre commune under the guise of a colony he dubbed Jonestown in 1975. By 1977, Jonestown housed over 1,000 followers and things had taken a dark turn.

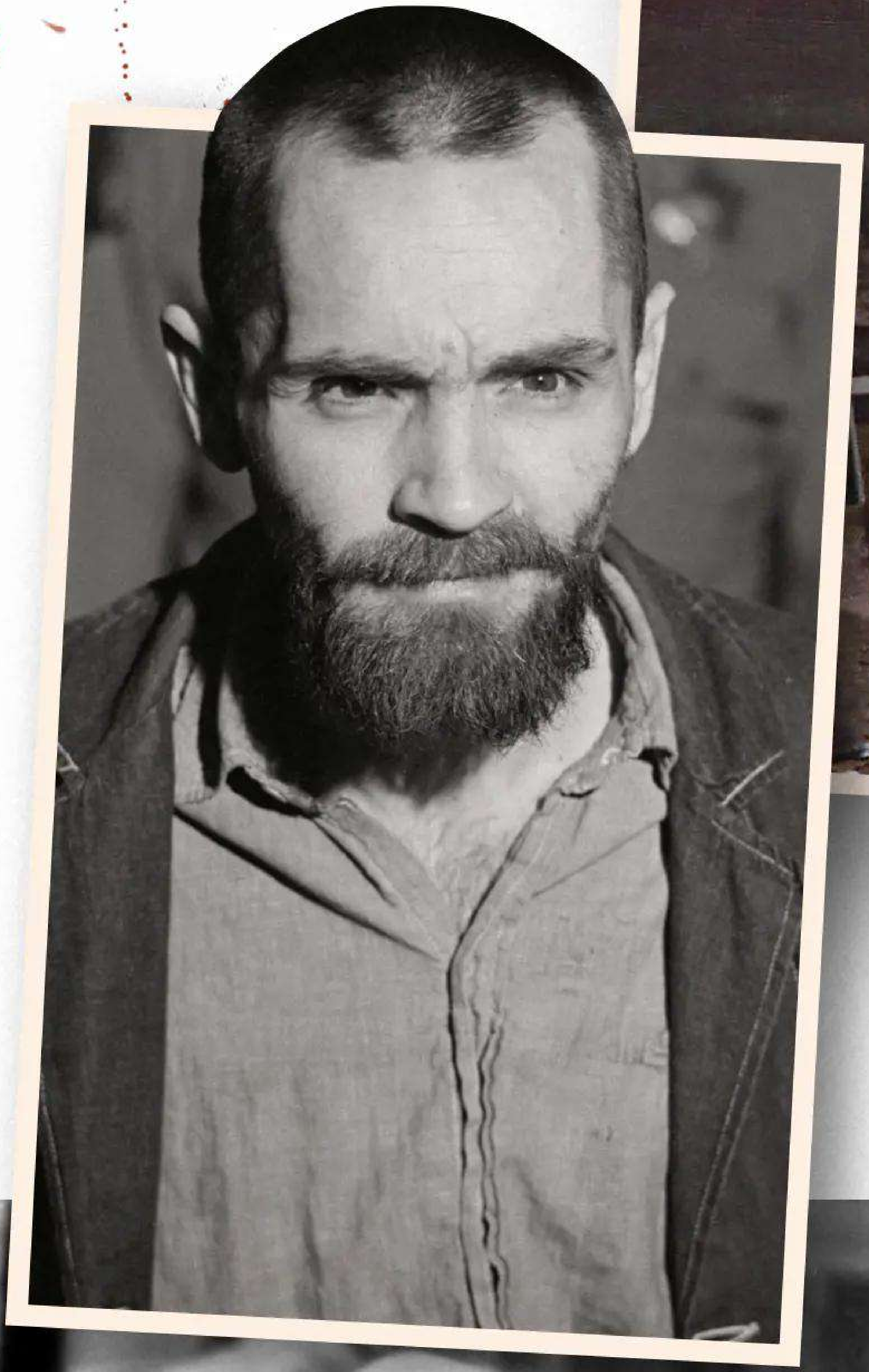
Jones ruled as a God-like figure, took control of his congregation's bank accounts, stole their passports, beat them, forced them to work and manipulated them into having sex with him. After a TV crew visited the site and helped 14 followers attempt to escape, Jones's brainwashed army retaliated, resulting in fatal shootings. Fearing the town was doomed, Jones told his devotees they must commit "mass revolutionary suicide" and administered cyanide-laced fruit punch to his congregation at the main church building. Those who wouldn't "drink the Kool-Aid " (this incident is the origin of the term) were forcibly injected with poison. 913 dead bodies, a third of which were children, were discovered by Guyanese troops on 19 November 1978, including Jones – who had suffered a fatal bullet wound to the head.



Jones convinced his followers to take poison en masse, leading to 913 deaths

THE MANSON FAMILY

The hub of this bloody cult never committed murder himself



After being released from jail in 1967, 32-year-old ex-pimp Charles Manson used the free-spirited San Francisco 'Summer of Love' to lure vulnerable young women into being his devoted disciples. Thanks to his manipulative charms, around 100 people fell under his spell within a year and he moved his extended 'family' to Los Angeles to rub shoulders with the rich and famous, prostituting his female disciples in the hopes of getting himself a record deal.

Manson used occult religion and philosophy to control women, convincing them he was both the Devil and Christ's second coming. He later commented from prison that he liked women "just as long as they keep their mouths shut and do what they are supposed to do. That is the extent of it. All this occult, hocus pocus [stuff] is a fairytale." However the horrors left behind by his followers' bloody murder spree in 1969 were like something ripped from the darkest pages of the Brothers Grimm's collection.

Never getting his own hands dirty, he wielded his powers of persuasion to carry out operation Helter Skelter, beginning with the killing of a UCLA PhD student, Gary Hinman, when he wouldn't join his cult and turn over his money. Next he instigated the massacre at the home of film director Roman Polanski's pregnant wife, Sharon Tate. The actress was enjoying an evening with three friends when four of Manson's followers broke in and murdered them all, as well as an 18-year-old boy who happened to be visiting the property's caretaker, leaving the word 'Pig' scrawled on the door in Tate's blood. The white supremacist Manson then accompanied six of his followers to kill a couple in Los Feliz with the intention of sparking a race war. Manson died in prison in 2017, age 83.

PRESS
PRESS

Manson brainwashed his followers into committing murder

THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS

David Koresh's faction went down in flames

Best known as the 'Waco Cult', a subsect of the Branch Davidians were devoted to the teachings of David Koresh, a man they believed to be the messiah. The Branch Davidians had broken away from the Protestant order, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and Koresh's faction were established on a large rural property near Waco, Texas. Koresh was a naturally charismatic speaker whose interpretations of the Bible were so popular that local church leaders were overthrown in his favour. While Koresh's cult were devoted, rumours of tax evasion, illegal weapons and accusations of rape against Koresh had reached the FBI. On 28 February 1993, forces arrived with a search warrant, but Koresh refused to allow entry. He previously prophesied that his disciples would be killed during Passover week, before being resurrected and ordered to establish God's new kingdom. After a media tip-off, a simple raid became the longest siege in US law-enforcement history. Over a period of 50 days, some followers left willingly, but most remained inside the compound, including Koresh, who claimed to be decoding a sacred text. On 19 April, agents moved to force out Koresh, using tear gas, armoured vehicles, and battering rams. First returning gunfire, the cult set a blaze that spread quickly, killing 76 people, including Koresh and 23 children.

They Will Not find David Bones! He Alive
INRI

HEAVEN'S GATE

This UFO cult wanted to transcend Earth

On 22 March 1997, while much of America looked up at the night sky to catch a glimpse of the Hale-Bopp comet, a group of people in San Diego prepared to die. They recorded messages, speaking of excitement and thankfulness to their leaders, before eating sedative-laced apple sauce, laying on their beds, and pulling plastic bags over their heads. The Heaven's Gate cult believed that in killing their earthly bodies, their souls would ascend to meet the UFO hidden in the comet's flaming tail.

Led by Marshall Herff Applewhite Jr, the Heaven's Gate cult was the antithesis of his religious upbringing. He previously lost his university job and family after making romantic motions towards a male student, and admitted himself to a psychiatric facility where he met nurse Bonnie Nettles. Nettles claimed their meeting was prophesied by extraterrestrials, after which they developed the doctrine of Heaven's Gate and toured America as 'The Two', pushing the theory that the world had been seeded with humans by extraterrestrials, who would return to retrieve the chosen ones. Initially offering a sense of belonging, following Nettles' death in 1985, Applewhite became far more dogmatic and introduced suicide as a means of ascending to a better existence. After the comet's appearance, law enforcement were met with 39 bodies, 18 men and 21 women.

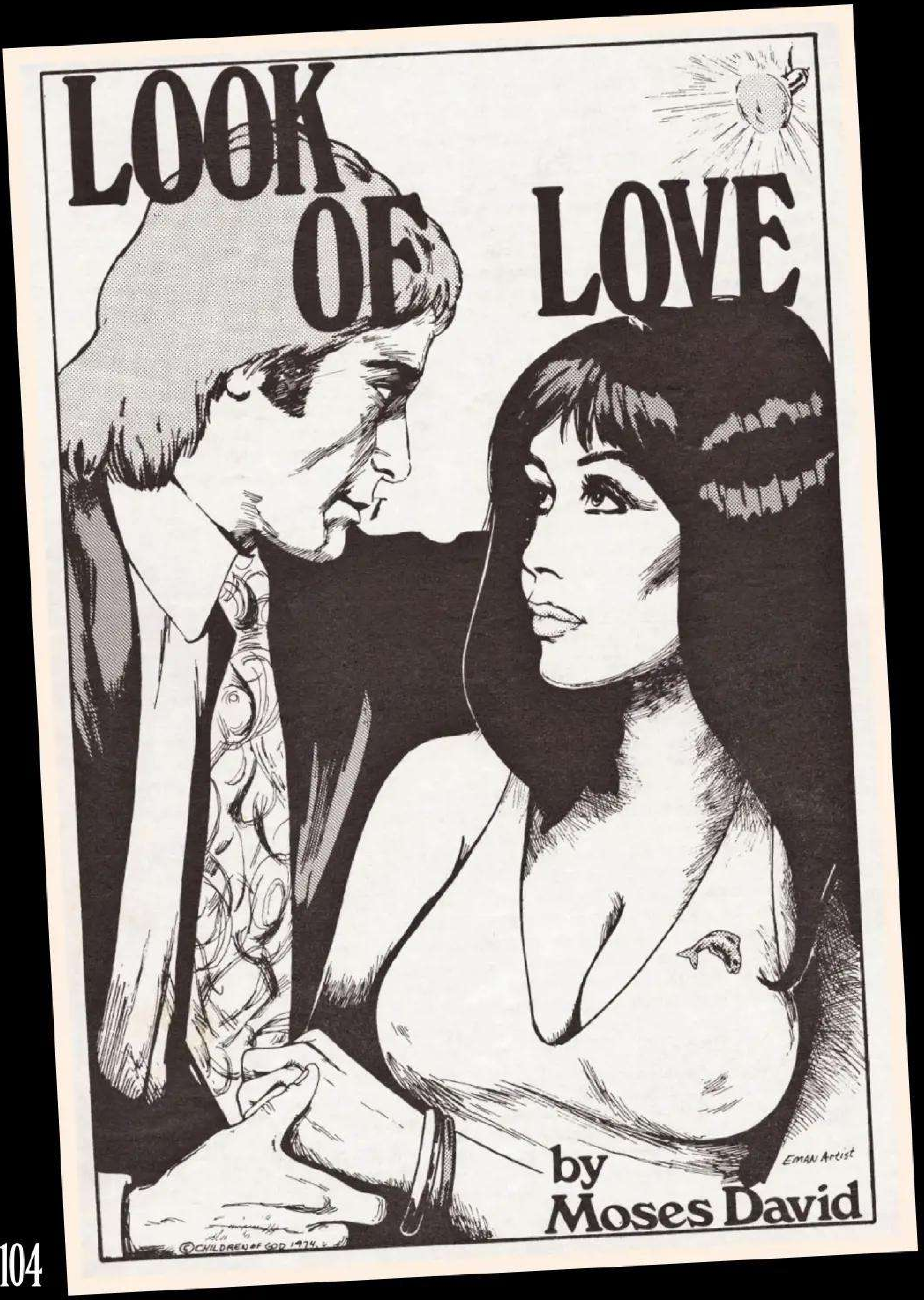
Followers took sedatives, suffocated themselves and lay down to die

CHILDREN OF GOD (aka The Family International)

Sex was a vital tool in this sect's recruitment

Founded in a California coffee shop in 1968, The Children of God was the creation of evangelical pastor David Berg and his siblings. Capitalising on the intersection of the hippy movement and born-again Christianity, his small group of followers bequeathed all their possessions to Berg, cut off family, left their jobs and joined the church as missionaries. Presenting himself as a prophet, Berg played matchmaker with his followers, encouraging married couples to establish their own branches of his church.

Many of Berg's religious laws were of a sexual nature, encouraging the sharing of wives, and the implementation of 'Flirty Fishing' whereby attractive women were used as bait to lure in wealthy or influential male parties. By the 1980s, Berg's daughter Deborah had exposed her father's sexual propositions to her and her sister, with whom he had an incestuous relationship. Soon, accusations of rape, violence and child sexual conduct were rife, as it was revealed that Berg had both sanctioned and advocated child sex, child marriage and sex between adults and children. David Berg died in 1994, never having faced charges, while the communes were disbanded in 2010. Now known as 'The Family International', Berg's church continues online with an estimated 1450 members.



NXIVM co-founder Nancy Salzman played a crucial role in recruiting cult members
GOVERNMENT
EXHIBIT
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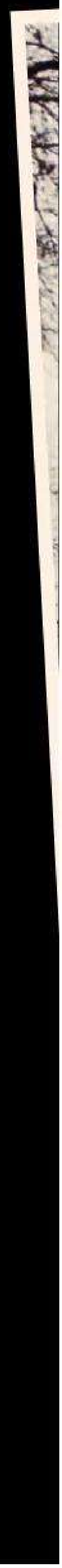
NXIVM

Sex, celebrities, and multi-level marketing scams

Founded as a self-help group that claimed to help unlock a person's full potential, NXIVM (pronounced 'nexium') was associated with a celebrity clientele until tales of branding, slavery and sexual abuse emerged. The brainchild of Keith Raniere and Nancy Salzman, NXIVM's roots were laid in Raniere's early attempts at multi-level-marketing. Raniere's previous billion-dollar business, Consumers Buyline, was condemned as a pyramid scheme and ordered to close. After meeting Salzman in 1997, Raniere soon became Salzman's spiritual advisor, as the pair began to peddle 'Executive Success Programs', all under Raniere's image, upholding him as an impossibly intelligent and accomplished guru. This facade snared several high profile clients; heiresses, politicians, actresses, all of whom financially contributed to the system. In attending classes and donating money, members would rise through the ranks, often recruiting new members as a means of earning commission. Any discomfort at costs of the course's content was deemed to be further proof that they needed re-education, where those in need, in crisis, or trying to leave NXIVM were all condemned. Raniere's secret offshoot group, Dominus Obsequious Sororium (DOS), focused on the recruitment of women, all of whom were required to hand over 'collateral'; namely material that would harm them if it were ever made public. These 'slaves' were given regular tasks, kept incredibly thin, threatened with their 'collateral' and even branded with Raniere's own initials. In 2020, Raniere was sentenced to 120 years for offences including sex trafficking and possession of child pornography.



Women of the group are made to wear traditional prairie dresses and long hair

FUNDAMENTALIST CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (FLDS)

A strict Mormon spin-off with a slew of criminal convictions

The FLDS is a Mormon breakaway sect, regarded as a modern extremist group, owing to the control exerted over its membership, particularly women. FLDS members live in rural, isolated communities, free from modern amenities and with interaction with the outside world forbidden. Children are largely homeschooled, while women are required to wear long prairie dresses and leave their hair long and uncut.

One of the central tenets of the FLDS is polygamy, where men take multiple wives. Warren Jeffs, the cult's most prominent former leader, took 60 wives for himself, while abusing many others and assigning girls to older men. He received a life sentence in 2011 for sexually abusing two girls, including a 12-year-old he regarded as a wife. The FLDS regard their leader to be a prophet, with God speaking through him directly. Possessing total control, he assigns wives to husbands and delivers punishments by 'reassigning' wives and families to different men. While the FLDS has largely disbanded, smaller groups continue with new prophets, such as Samuel Bateman who established a sect in 2019 and was jailed for 50 years in 2022. While tales of abuse and brutality are inescapable, the FLDS still has up to 10,000 active members, with many believing Warren Jeffs is a falsely-imprisoned prophet.

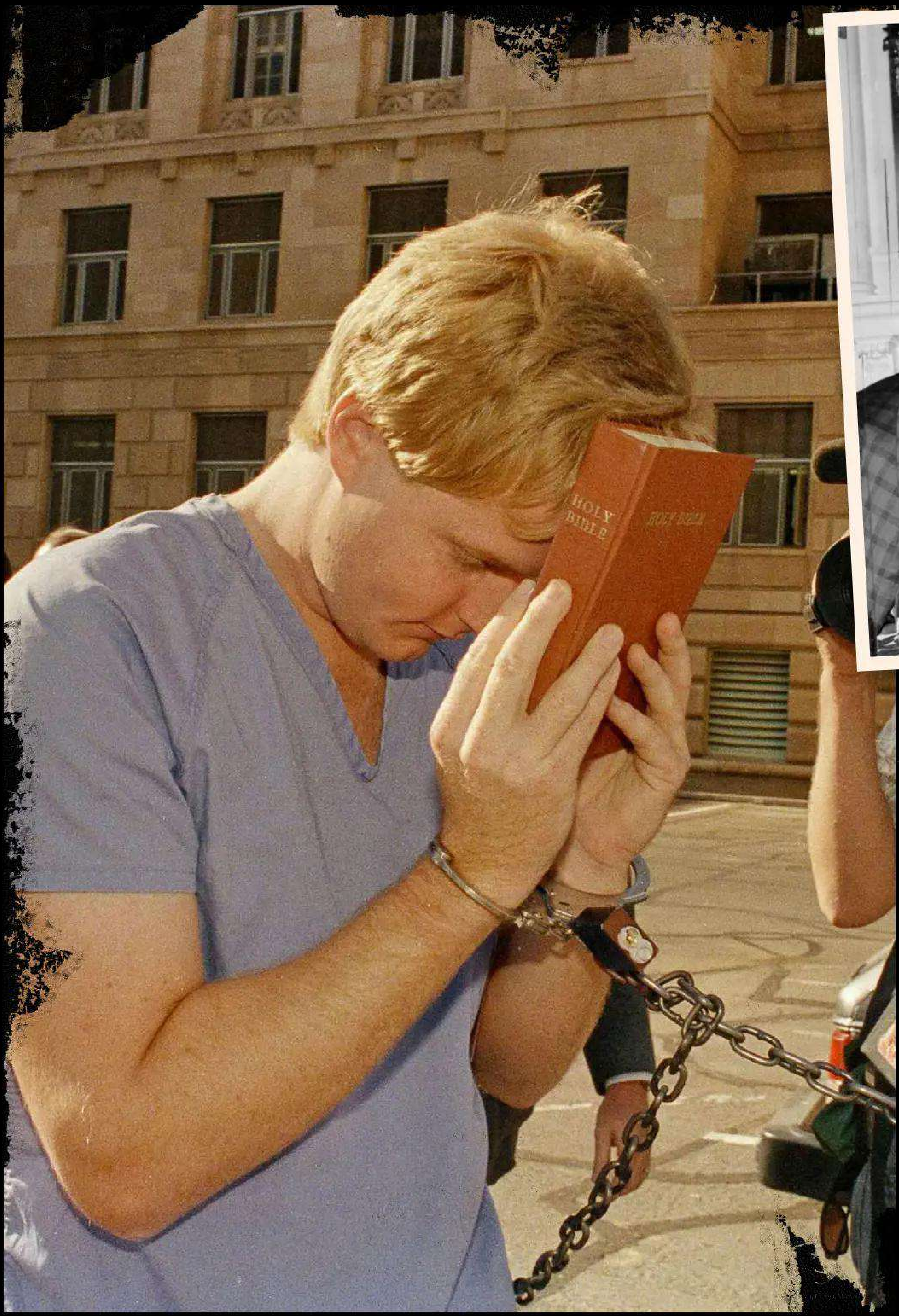
SCIENTOLOGY

This notorious group boasts Hollywood titans among its membership

Scientology has long been regarded as the world's largest and most powerful contemporary cult. Lafayette Ronald Hubbard was an established science fiction writer by the time he wrote *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* in 1950. A diversion from his regular fare, it became Scientology's central text. Loosely taking the form of a self-help book, it stated that survival is mankind's greatest goal. However, Scientology is best known for its belief in extraterrestrials, namely Xenu and the Galactic Federation. Revealed to members at a high level, Xenu is said to be an alien overlord who ruled the Galactic Federation 75 million years ago. In response to overpopulation, Xenu destroyed the Federations' planets and froze countless souls, depositing some on Earth. Humans are believed to be immortal souls known as 'thetans', living without memories of their former selves. Only through completion of many classes will thetans be able to re-emerge. Those leaving the organisation frequently emerge with horror stories of terror, violence and abuse. Best known is the church's tactic of sustained harassment, or 'fair gaming', whereby church detractors are stalked and threatened. Many prominent former-Scientologists now seek to expose the church's brutal methods, while the Aftermath Foundation offers support for those wanting to leave.

SCIENTOLOGY

Scientology's imposing headquarters in Los Angeles, California



THE CHURCH OF THE LAMB OF GOD

Breakaway Mormon murder cult

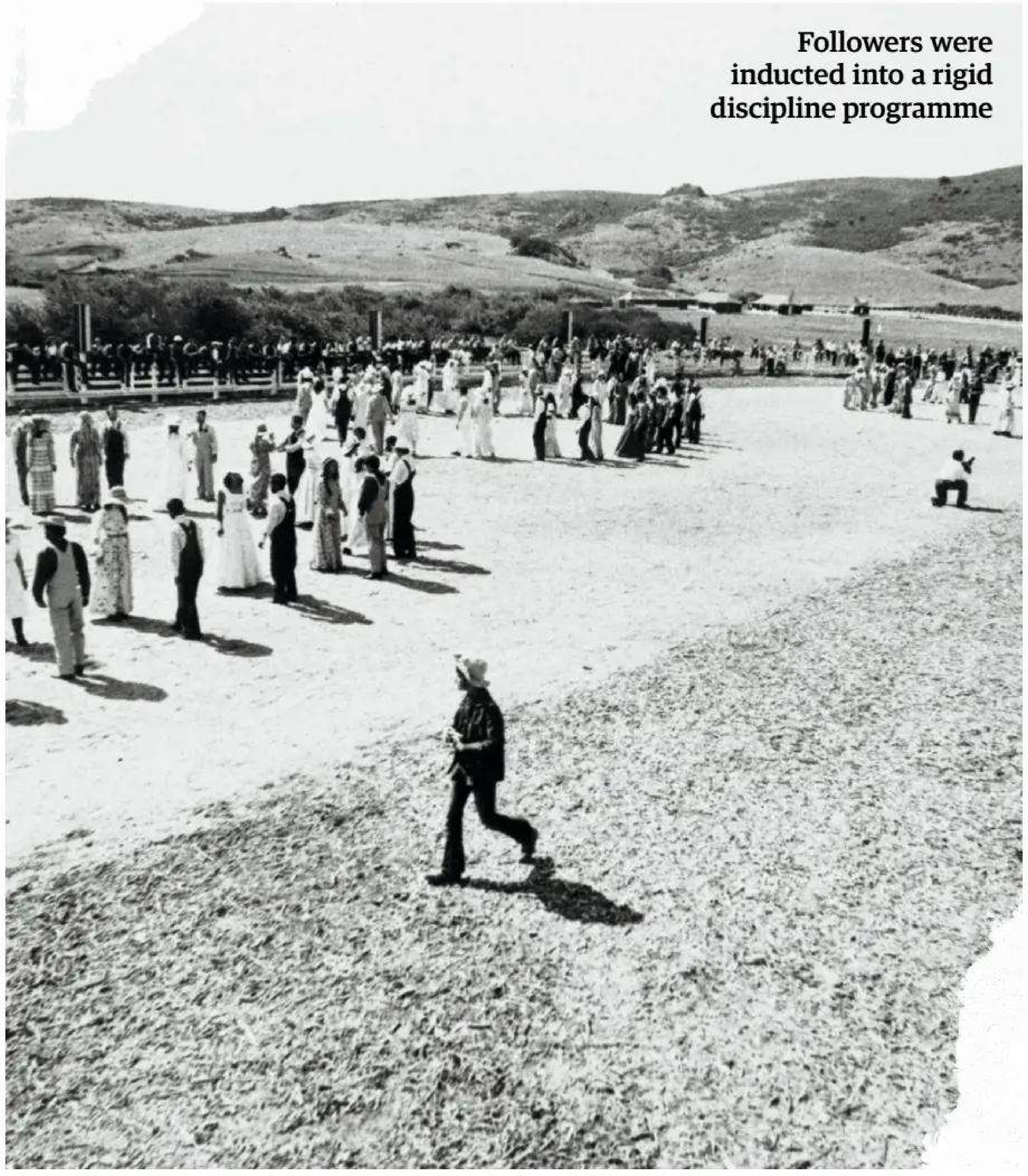
Founded by Ervil Morrell LeBaron, the Church of the Lamb of God was a violent Latter Day Saint group and an offshoot of the Mormon religion. LeBaron considered himself to be a prophet and to his flock he was the One Mighty who had been sent to Earth in order to purify the Mormon faith. He had inherited this mantle from his late father Alma Dayer LeBaron. Expelled in the 1950s by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints because he continued to practice polygamy, which had been abandoned by the church in 1890, Ervil went on to have over 50 children with his 13 wives. When he wasn't busy procreating he was organising hits: over the course of two decades it's believed he ordered the murders of dozens of people. The media named him the 'Mormon Manson', and although he rarely involved himself directly in any violence as God's representative on Earth, he instructed his followers, who believed he was getting instructions directly from God to kill anyone who challenged LeBaron or threatened to leave the cult. This included two of his own children and one of his wives.

SYNANON

From addiction therapy to full-blown mind control

Founded in 1958 by Charles Dederich, a recovering alcoholic, Synanon was designed to rehabilitate drug and alcohol abusers. With incarceration previously having been considered the only option for addiction, this new 'cold turkey' and 'tough love' approach was considered revolutionary. Soon thousands of juvenile delinquents and addicts were ordered by the courts to take part in the programme. This of course came at a cost, and with its popularity growing Dederich began inviting non-addicts and even professionals to join. New members had to transfer all their assets to the organisation, resulting in a healthy bank balance of around $33 million £26.5 million). To avoid tax Synanon was declared a religion in 1974. Dederich's plan to create his own utopian society was under way.

Followers lived communally and took part in "truth-telling" sessions called "The Game". But as the number of besotted followers grew, so did Dederich's ego. He became psychotic, demanding his followers shave their heads and enforcing vasectomies and abortions. Any babies born into the cult were removed from their mothers to be raised in the "hatchery". Married couples were forced to split and take a new partner every three years. There was even a militant branch of the group, the Imperial Marines, whose job it was to inflict violence against opponents and take vengeance against any former members.



Followers were inducted into a rigid discipline programme

SATANIC PANIC!

A book about Satanic ritual abuse, the popularity of heavy metal music, and parental fears led to social hysteria

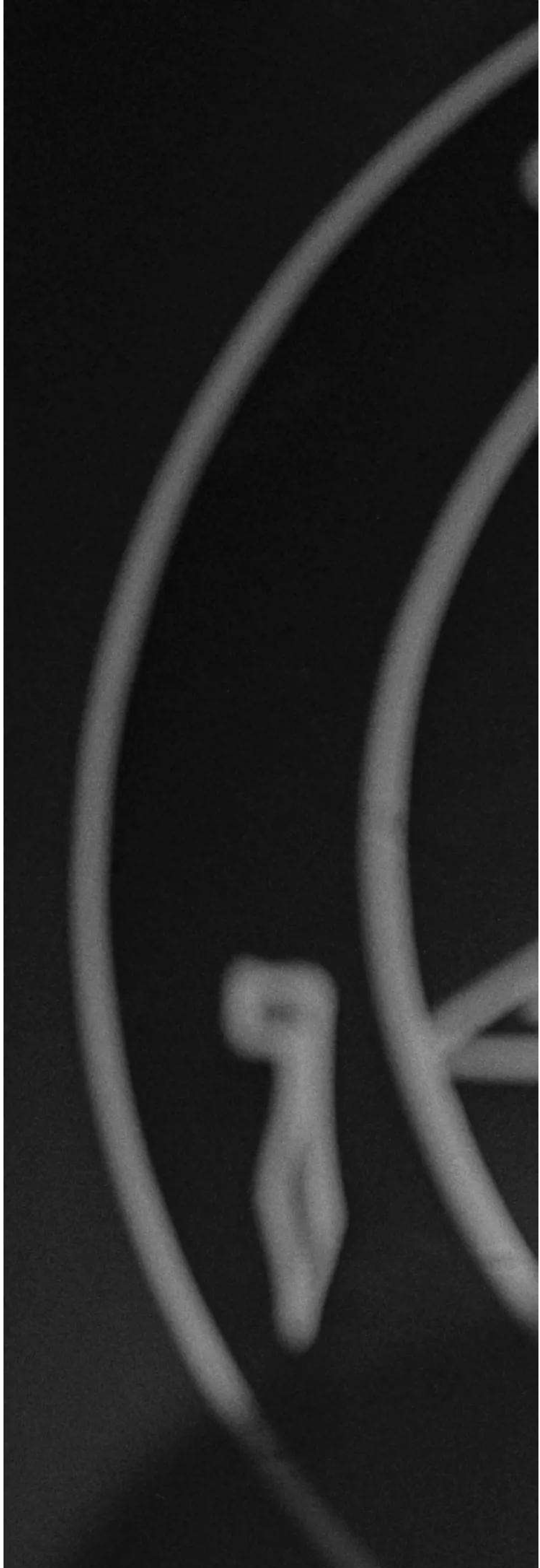
Words Icy Sedgwick

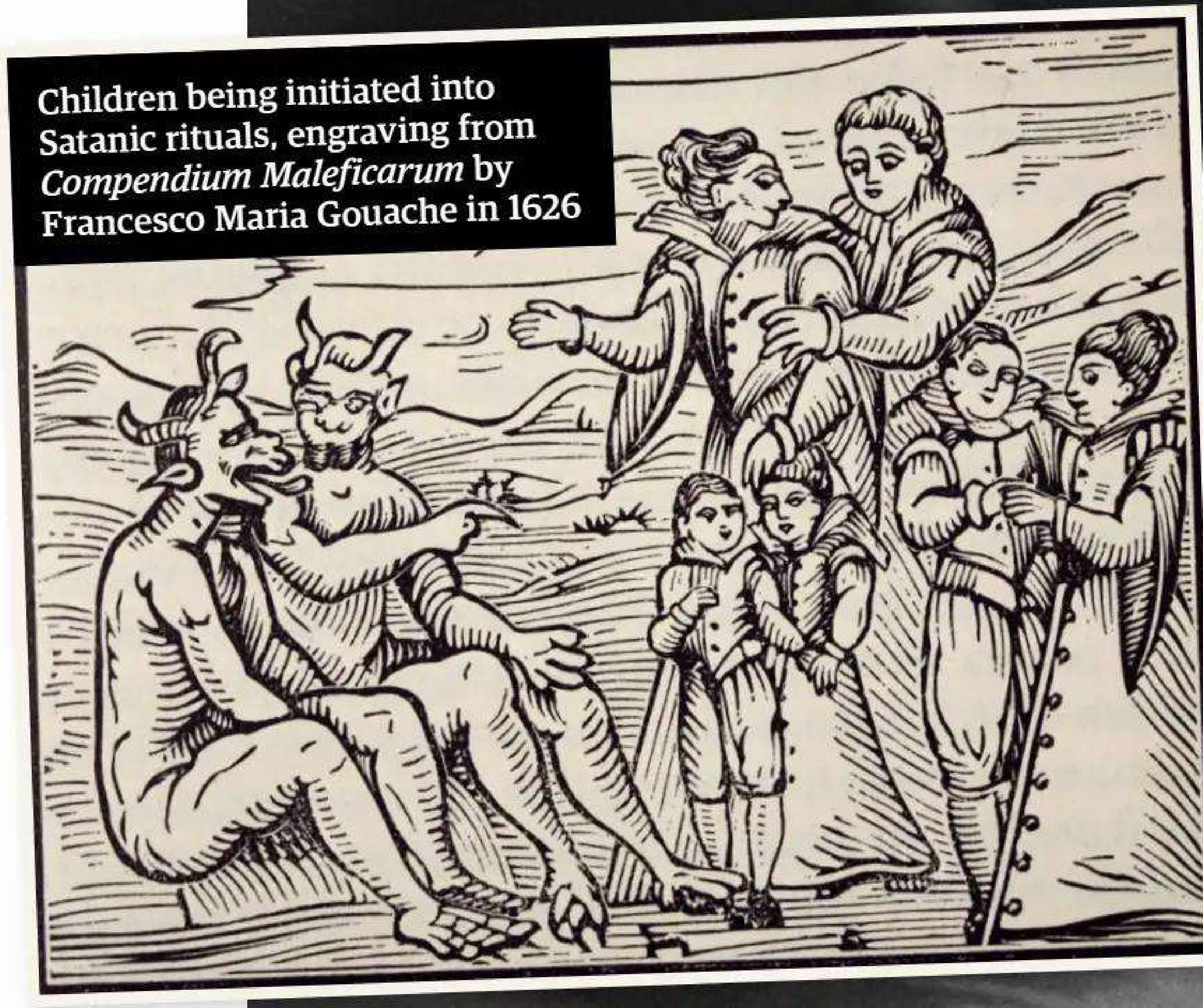
The so-called Satanic Panic was a moral panic beginning in the early 1980s and ending in the mid-1990s with HBO's docudrama, *Indictment: The McMartin Trial* (1995). The docudrama explored the McMartin Preschool court case at the centre of the Satanic Panic. In it, parents accused the teachers at a preschool of sexual and Satanic abuse.

The 2023 documentary *Satan Wants You!* identified the 1980 book *Michelle Remembers* as the origin point for the entire panic. Canadian psychologist Lawrence Pazder co-wrote the book with his patient, Michelle Smith. She apparently recovered her repressed memories of Satanic abuse during their sessions. Pazder pieced together her fragmented recollections and concluded that her mother gave her to a Satanic cul for ritual abuse. The term is now discredited, but it included both physical and sexual abuse during occult rituals. It also gave legitimacy to the idea of repressed memories. As a result, US parents accused staff at almost 100 daycare centres of both sexual and Satanic ritual abuse. The first of these claims was the McMartin Preschool in California, later featured in *Indictment*.

Public allegations fuelled the panic, which took two forms. On one side lay the accusations of sexual abuse and Satanic rituals at daycare centres. The other side saw claims that role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons, and heavy metal music, drove teens to suicide. The Devil himself sat in the overlapping circles of this Satanic Venn diagram.

Allegations ranged from the sinister to the ridiculous. The plausible accusations included sexual abuse. Yet children made other, more fantastical allegations. These included ritual



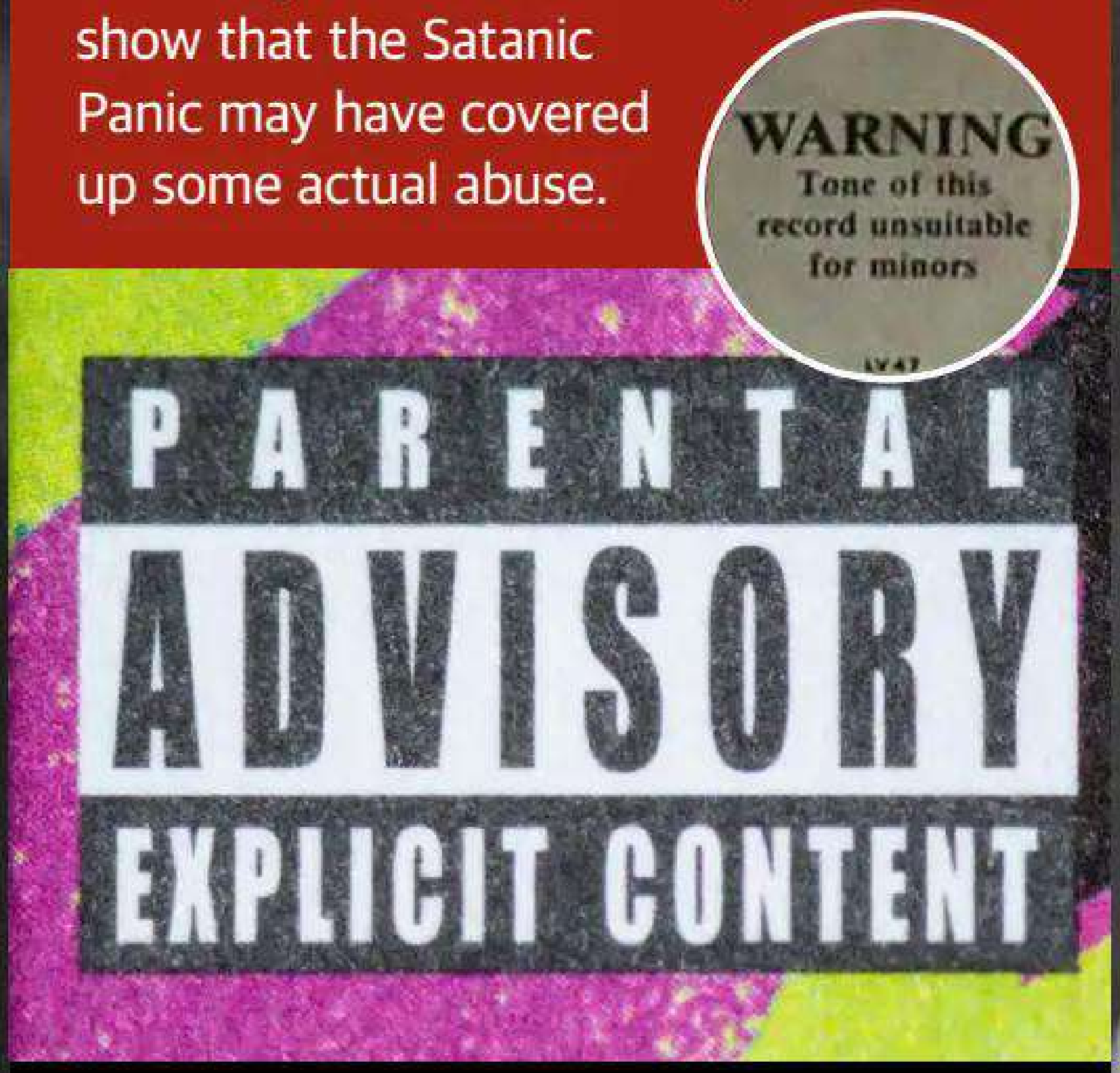


Children being initiated into Satanic rituals, engraving from *Compendium Maleficarum* by Francesco Maria Gouache in 1626

Parental Guidance

Fear of strangers and explicit lyrics

It's likely not every parent believed Satan himself was out to get their child. But they did fear the people who might do anything to please Satan. This fear of strangers didn't translate well to the need for parents to leave children at daycare. The growing divorce rate and mothers entering the workforce made daycare necessary. Parents were also unhappy that their teenagers wanted to listen to heavy metal, especially if they thought it contained satanic themes. Dee Snider of Twisted Sister and Frank Zappa even testified at a Senate Committee to defend rock. The panic even became a marketing ploy for heavy metal. But the daycare stories show that the Satanic Panic may have covered up some actual abuse.



The former design of the Parental Advisory label used by the Recording Industry Association of America, introduced in 1985

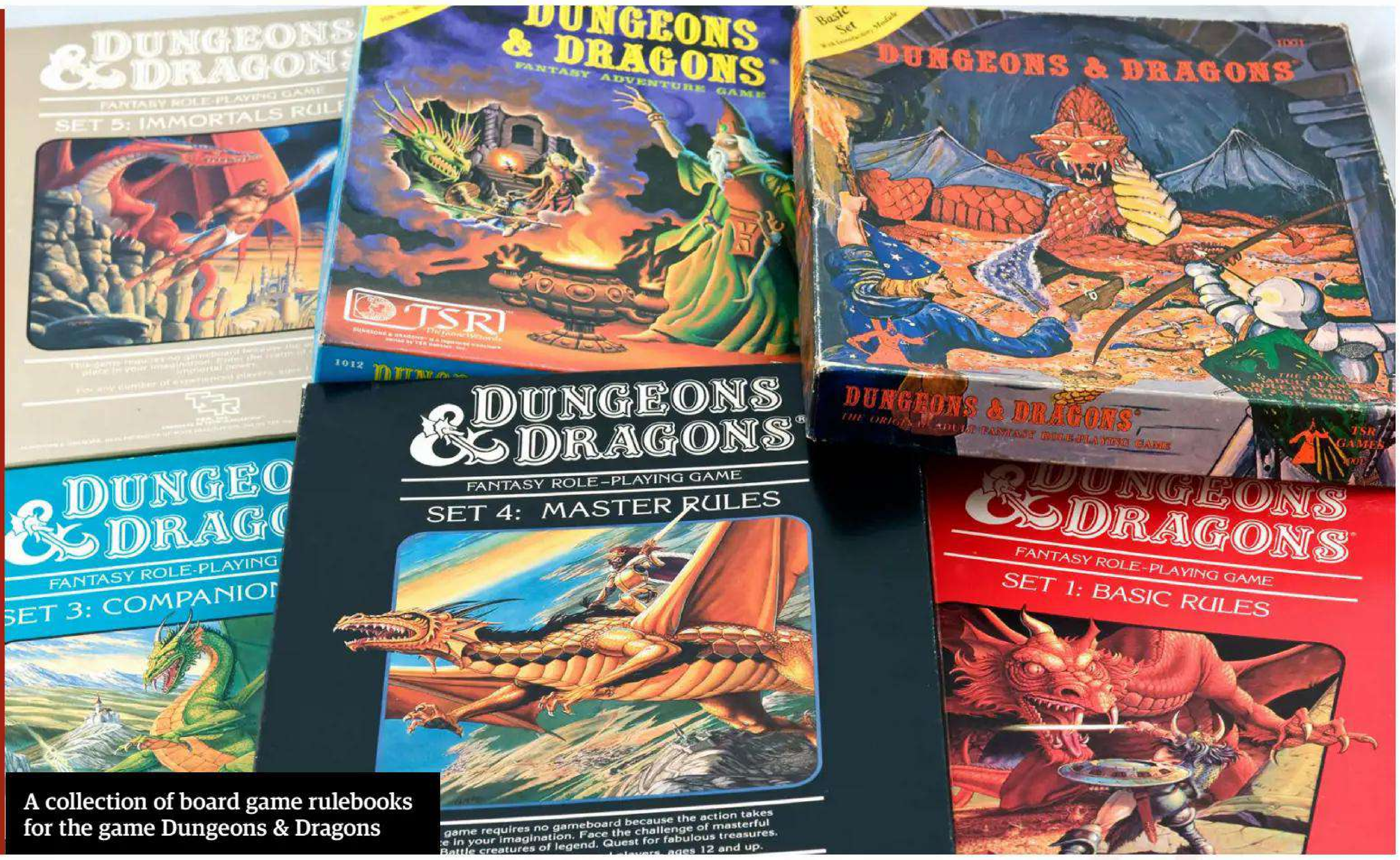
Anton LaVey's atheistic and humanist new religious movement, the Church of Satan, became a scapegoat for the fear and hysteria of the era

© Getty Images / Alamy

Dungeons & Dragons

Fantasy game accused of Devil worship

In 1979, teen prodigy James Dallas Egbert III went missing at Michigan State University. He hid in the university's utility tunnels during a depressive episode. But his parents hired a private investigator, who blamed D&D. Egbert shot himself in 1980. Activists ignored his depression and blamed D&D. Irving Pulling completed suicide in 1983, and his classmates described his psychological problems. Yet his mother, Patricia, blamed D&D. She believed another player cursed her son's character during a game at school. Patricia tried to sue the high school principal and D&D's publishers. Her advocacy group, Bothered about Dungeons & Dragons, also accused the game of promoting witchcraft.


A collection of board game rulebooks for the game Dungeons & Dragons

animal sacrifice, adults flushing children down toilets into hidden rooms, going to space, and flying witches.

The Kern County child abuse cases in California marked a virulent period of accusations. Beginning in 1982, a series of children accused their parents or other adults of sexual abuse. Authorities overturned 34 convictions on appeal after accusers later withdrew their claims. The county's social workers' training to recognise Satanic ritual abuse was based solely on the text of *Michelle Remembers*.

In 1983, accusations spread to Jordan, Minnesota. Children accused adults, including their parents, of sexual abuse. One girl claimed adults made her eat a pet gerbil. A boy described being driven to a party attended by women wielding whips. Children also claimed between one and six children were murdered, and the investigation faltered. The lack of murders brought the abuse accusations under greater scrutiny. No one filed charges. The Fells Acres daycare centre in Malden, Massachusetts, was next in 1984. A five-year-old boy accused Gerald Amirault, a bus driver and handyman, of touching him. Other accusations tumbled out of the children. These included abuse by clowns and robots in a 'magic room', watching people kill animals, and penetration with knives. In 1986, a judge sentenced Amirault to 30-40 years in jail.

In 1985, a four-year-old boy at the Wee Care Nursery School in Maplewood, New Jersey, told a nurse that a teacher abused him during naptime. In the ensuing investigation, 51 children accused their teacher, Kelly Michaels, of abuse. Convicted in 1988, she was released following an appeal in 1993. People questioned the coercive methods used when interviewing the children.

Finally, in 1989, seven workers at the Little Rascals Day Care Centre in Edenton, North Carolina, were arrested and charged with child sexual abuse. Children testified at owner Bob Kelly's trial about his apparently killing babies at the centre, throwing children overboard from boats, or even taking them to space in a hot air balloon. The jury found Kelly guilty. A judge later overturned his conviction due to legal errors made by the prosecution.

Sociologist Mary deYoung explained that moral panics spread during times of social upheaval. People seek an enemy as the cause of that upheaval. As an example, the so-called Little Ice Age in northern Europe devastated communities in the 16th and 17th centuries. Geologist David Bressan suggested the climate-related famines contributed to the witch panics at the time. Witches became the folk devil responsible for the changing weather conditions, crop destruction, and widespread starvation.

In the 1980s, people worried about the rise of the 'latchkey generation'. With parents at work, children went home from school to empty houses. The lack of parental supervision prompted concerns about what the kids were up to. Others worried about the use of daycare as more mothers entered employment.

Even the innovation of putting missing children's photos on milk cartons created

Dungeons & Dragons during a tabletop gaming experience at SXSW Sydney in 2024.

McMartin Pre-School in 1987

© Getty Images, Alamy

"Despite the investigations, no actual Satanic cults appeared as the root cause"

paranoia. No more children went missing than usual. But the greater awareness of missing persons prompted public assumptions that Satanic cults were stealing children.

Moral panics centre around a 'folk devil'. The Satanic Panic chose the literal Devil and his 'followers' as its cause. Despite the investigations, no actual Satanic cults appeared as the root cause.

The rise of social work and better awareness of child protection issues also added to the panic. The interest in repressed memories stirred up by *Michelle Remembers* played a part. Well-meaning workers alerted authorities to abuse, as they should. The children's initial disavowals weren't taken seriously. Parents and therapists pushed them for 'what really happened', leading to the fantastical claims.

Among others, clinical psychologist Michael P Maloney reviewed the children's interviews in the McMartin Preschool trial. He noticed the use of highly coercive interview techniques. These contradicted California's own investigative guidelines for cases involving child witnesses.

Cinema also played a role, especially *The Witches* (1966), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Omen* (1976). They were highly controversial movies at the time and primed cinema audiences to accept that Devil worshippers could hide in plain sight.

Heavy metal musicians used diabolical imagery and got branded as Satan worshippers. People thought Led Zeppelin, Mötley Crüe, Judas Priest, and Black Sabbath hid Satanic messages in their songs. The messages only became clear if you played the song backwards. Serial killer Richard Ramirez's obsession with the AC/DC song

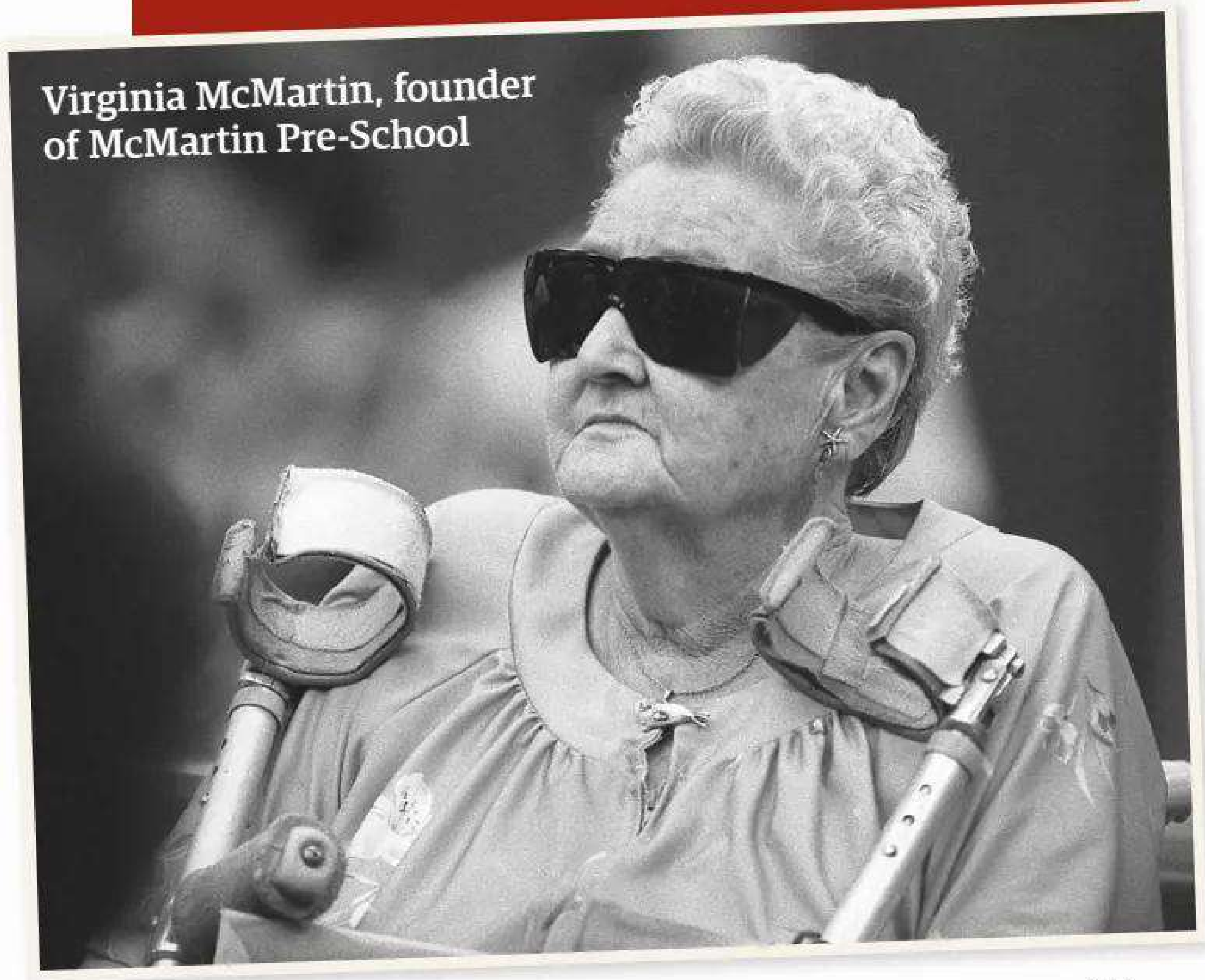
When accused of hiding messages in music urging fans towards suicide, Judas Priest frontman Rob Halford pointed out that bands would more likely urge fans to buy more singles

The McMartin Preschool Trial

Manhattan Beach, CA

One of the first daycares accused

This trial centred around a preschool founded by Virginia McMartin in California. McMartin's grandson, Ray Buckey, was a teacher there. In August 1983, Judy Johnson accused Buckey of sexually abusing her two-year-old son. Parents and therapists questioned other children at the school. First, the children accused Ray and other teachers of sexual abuse. Then, they claimed the McMartins conducted Satanic rituals in hidden tunnels under the school. They mutilated animals, dressed as witches, drank blood, sacrificed babies, and flew through the air. One of the children even identified Chuck Norris as an abuser from a photograph. In 1986, police dropped charges against the other teachers for lack of evidence. Extensive investigation showed no tunnels lay under the school. Buckey and his mother, Peggy, went to trial in April 1987. The jury watched the children's testimony on tape. In April 1989, Peggy was acquitted, while Buckey was acquitted on some charges. The jury admitted that the suggestive interviewing techniques made it difficult to work out what had happened. The focus on coercive questioning led to tighter controls on children's testimony. Buckey faced trial again in 1990, and prosecutors dropped the case following a deadlocked jury. Buckey spent five years in prison.



Virginia McMartin, founder of McMartin Pre-School

© Getty Images / Alamy / Wiki Commons

'Night Prowler' didn't help. Ramirez also displayed a Satanic symbol on his left palm and yelled "Hail Satan!" during his trial.

Meanwhile, the fantasy role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons debuted in 1974. Despite featuring in ET (1982), its inclusion of magic saw it linked with the Satanic Panic. The suicides of two players also led their parents to blame the game. The CDC and the American Association of Suicidology found no causal link between suicide and playing D&D.

Attendances at mainstream Christian churches declined throughout the 1970s. This coincided with the rise of the New Age movement and the birth of cults. Many feared cults following the 1960s Manson Family murders and the 1978 Jonestown massacre.

With so many examples of groups with fringe beliefs, it became easier to believe in hidden groups of Satan worshippers. The foundation of the Church of Satan in 1966 didn't help. The Church became embroiled in the panic due to its association with Satan.

Such a climate birthed Geraldo Rivera's news special in 1988. In *Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground*, he claimed millions of Americans were Satanists.

An investigative article in MacLeans in 1981 debunked Michelle Remembers, with little success. Eventually, it was the insurance industry that calmed the panic. The insurers of daycare centres fought the claims of ritual abuse in court. The growing lack of evidence prompted the question, "Did this ever happen?" The University of California's Psychiatric Department released a report in 1995. They also found no hard evidence for Satanic ritual abuse.

Yet even though the events of the Satanic Panic unfolded over thirty years ago, its effects rumble on. The QAnon conspiracy theory and Pizzagate are two visible descendants of the panic.

QAnon began as a far-right movement on the internet's fringes. It claims a Satanic group of paedophiles and cannibals controls the world's elite. Pizzagate involved a supposed child sex-trafficking ring run by Democrats, operating out of a Washington, D.C. pizza restaurant. Despite the lack of evidence, armed believers visited the restaurant to investigate themselves.

The partial release of the Epstein Files also led to a resurgence in Satanic Panic rhetoric. After all, they provide evidence of real child-abusing rings patronised by the elite. However, the focus on a Satanic element obscures the real harm done by such rings. The victims disappear beneath controversial headlines and conspiracy theories.

Black Sabbath, one of the bands blamed for having a Satanic influence on teenagers

Devil worship: Exposing Satan's underground

The Devil is in the documentary

Geraldo Rivera aired *Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground* on his talk show in 1988. In it, he took a range of things as evidence of widespread Satanism. This included: a rise in graverobbing; defacement of churches; murders citing Satan as a motive; heavy metal's popularity; and a growing belief in demonic possession. He also cited serial killers Charles Manson, David Berkowitz and Richard Ramirez as proof of the existence of Satanists on a mass scale. Rivera interviewed Black Sabbath frontman Ozzy Osbourne, members of the Church of Satan and Temple of Set, and teen metal fans who claimed to have killed for Satan. He reached few concrete conclusions and provided little real evidence. His main warning was to parents, warning them to be vigilant about their teens' behaviour. According to Rivera, Satanists were everywhere.

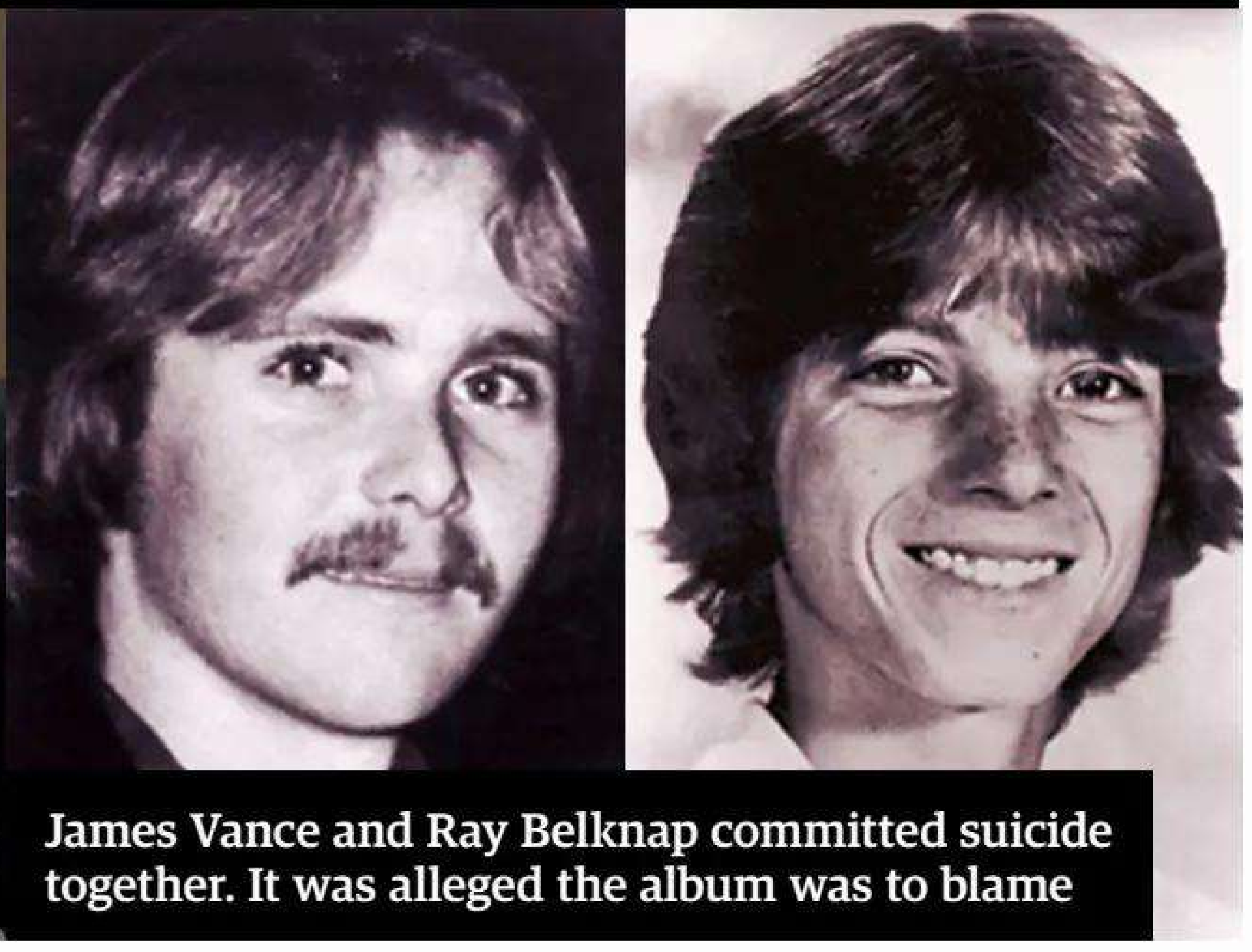
Heavy Metal on trial

Judas Priest bared the brunt of accusations thrown at musical artists

During the Satanic Panic era, numerous rock and metal bands were accused of hiding demonic messages in their music when their records were played backwards, including Led Zeppelin, AC/DC and even The Eagles. But this all came to a head in 1990, when British rock band Judas Priest faced a highly publicised trial following the tragic death of two of their young American fans. 20-year-old James Vance and his friend 18-year-old Ray Belknap entered a suicide pact in December 1985 after listening to the band's album Stained Class. Both boys had a history of drug use and mental health issues but, seeking someone to blame for the tragedy, their families sued the band instead, leading to a month of court proceedings. The lawsuit was dismissed by the judge in August 1990, but it had a long-lasting effect on the band members and it tarnished the image of their 1978 album forever.

The album coincided with an image change for the band

The band members were profoundly impacted



James Vance and Ray Belknap committed suicide together. It was alleged the album was to blame

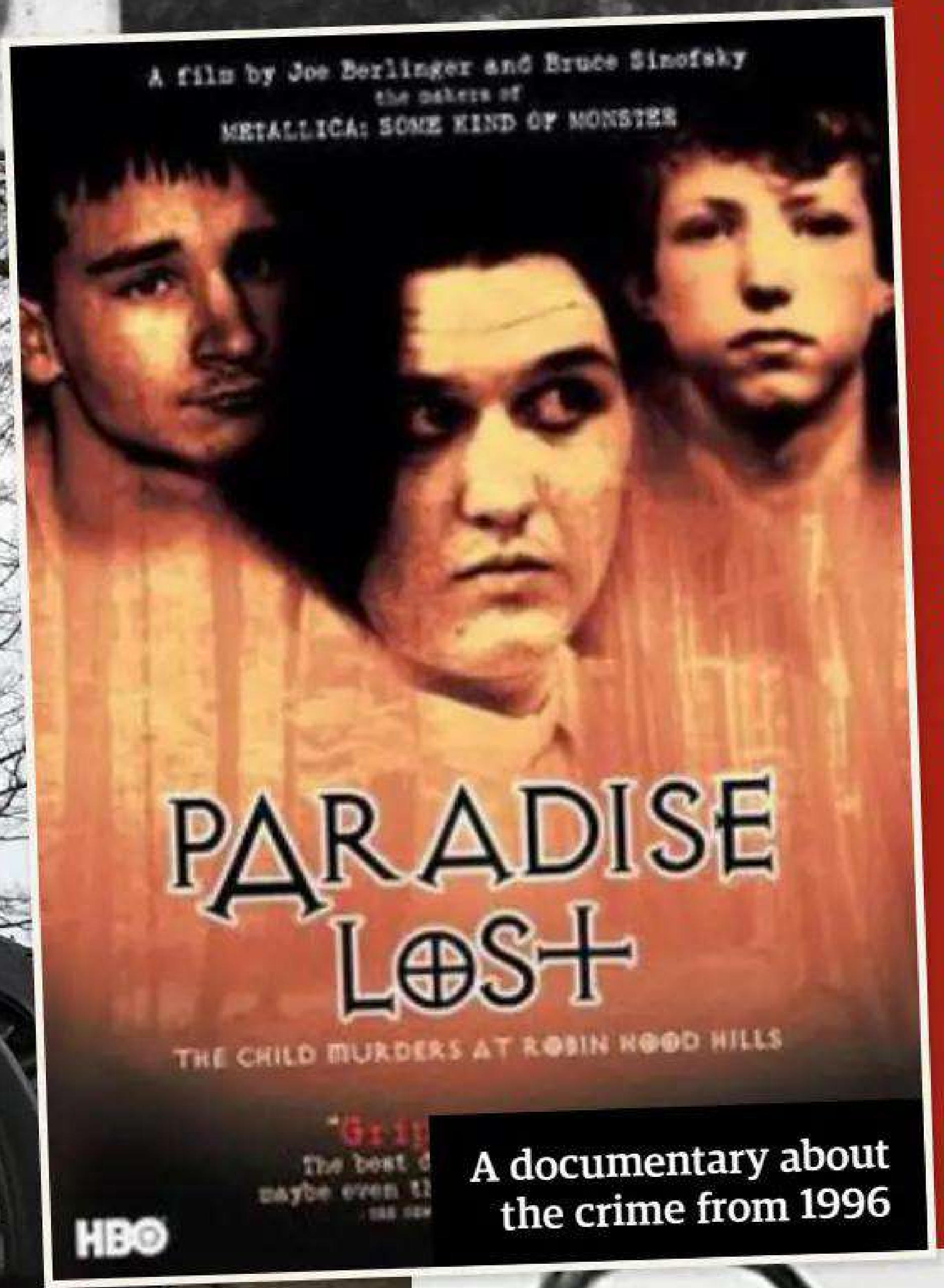
An abandoned concrete cotton gin near Marion, Arkansas, where prosecutors alleged the teens performed occult rituals

The West Memphis Three

West Memphis, Arkansas * 5 May 1993

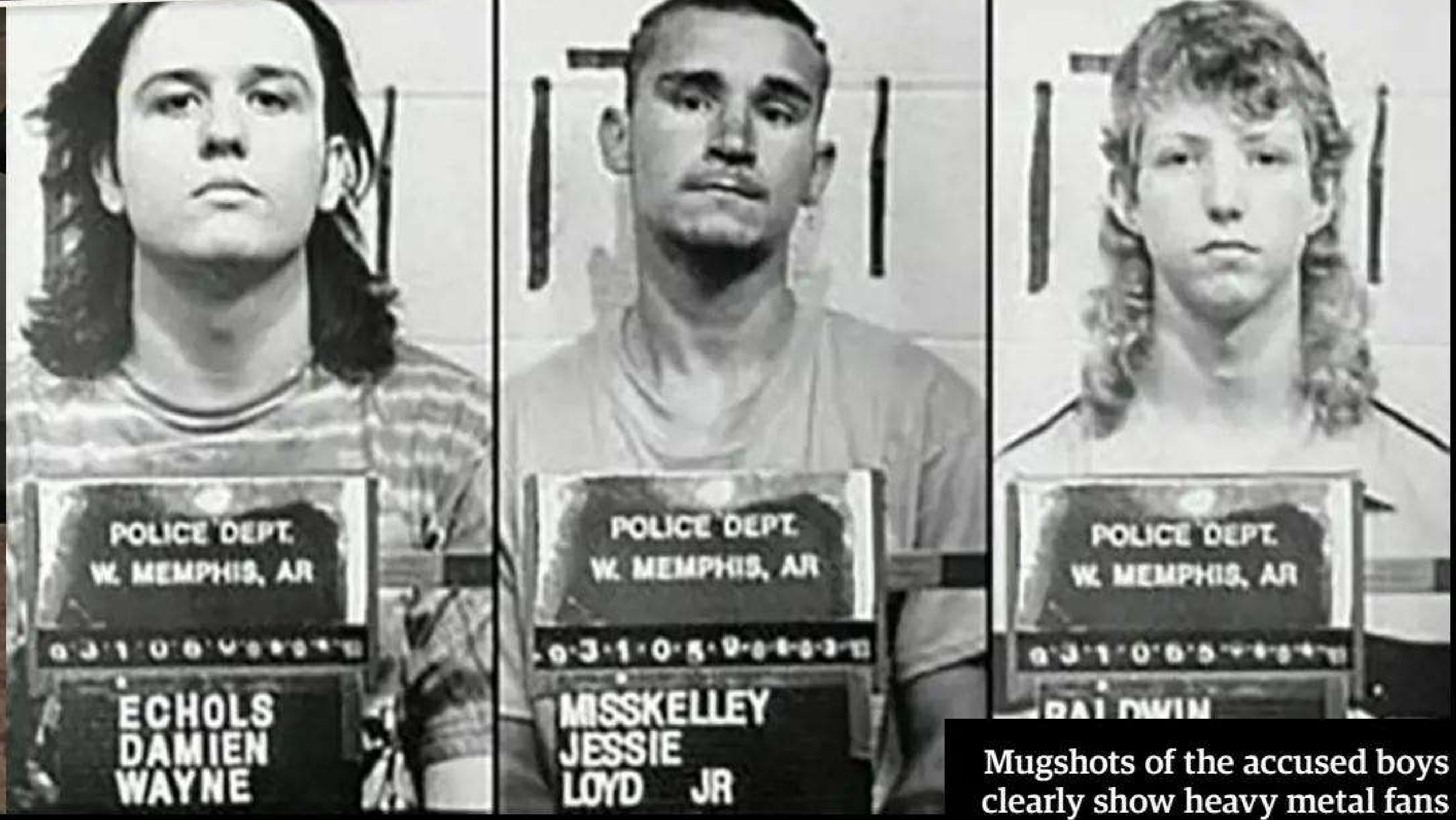
Satanic cults proved a distraction in this unsolved murder case

Three eight-year-old boys were murdered in 1993 in West Memphis, Arkansas. Their names were Michael Moore, Stevie Branch, and Chris Byers. In 1994, three teenagers, Jason Baldwin, Damien Echols, and Jessie Misskelley Jr, were convicted of their murders. The prosecution alleged the teenagers committed the murders during a Satanic ritual. Focus on the 'cult' theory dominated the investigation. Police ignored other possibilities, such as the presence of the victims' blood on a knife owned by Byers' stepfather. False testimony from a local woman led to Misskelley's interrogation. His confession followed, but it didn't match the details of the crime. He recanted the confession. Another witness described a person of interest on the night the three boys disappeared. He was a confused man covered in blood and mud who entered a local restaurant. The police took samples of the blood he left in the bathroom, but they lost the samples. During the trial, a cult expert testified that the defendants' music and clothing suggested Satanic activity. Yet there was widespread criticism of the way the police handled the investigation. Bruce Sinofsky and Joe Berlinger released a documentary to raise awareness in 1996. Arkansas reporter Mara Leveritt wrote a book to prove it was a miscarriage of justice. In 2007, police tested DNA found at the crime scene, and none matched the three suspects. Pearl Jam frontman Eddie Vedder and Johnny Depp lent their support to the case for an appeal. The three teenagers—now men—were released in August 2011. The case remains unsolved.


A film by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky
the makers of
METALLICA: SOME KIND OF MONSTER
PARADISE LOST
THE CHILD MURDERS AT ROBIN HOOD HILLS
HBO

A documentary about the crime from 1996

Damien Echols was released in 2011. The case is unsolved


POLICE DEPT.
W. MEMPHIS, AR
ECHOLS
DAMIEN
WAYNE
POLICE DEPT.
W. MEMPHIS, AR
MISSKELLEY
JESSIE
LOYD JR
POLICE DEPT.
W. MEMPHIS, AR

Mugshots of the accused boys clearly show heavy metal fans

© Getty Images / Alamy / Wiki Commons

CASUALTIES of the Constitution

In America, mass shootings have been steadily increasing for years and far outnumber those in other parts of the world. Their cost to life is devastating

Written by Catherine Curzon

Mass shootings, classed as incidents in which four or more people excluding the perpetrator are killed, have increasingly commanded headlines in recent decades. As incidents have risen, America has earned a grim reputation as the centre of mass shootings, with dramatically higher numbers of killings taking place in the United States than in any other country. Since the year 2000, America has witnessed over 100 mass shootings, compared to just a few dozen across other developed nations. In fact, the US alone accounts for over 70 per cent of mass shootings worldwide. According to figures from the Rockefeller Institute of Government, since 1966 there have been 511 mass shootings, in which 1,728 people have perished.

Amid an epidemic of gun violence that has claimed thousands of lives, firearm ownership is one of America's hottest and most divisive topics

MOMS
DEMAND
ACTION
FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA
18

Statistics show that the perpetrators of mass shootings are predominantly white and male. However, the statistical makeup of perpetrators reflects the population breakdown of the USA and once adjusted for demographics, all races have a similar probability of being a mass shooter. This adjustment also shows that the two main points that mass shooters have in common is gender and age, with 95.4 per cent of shooters being men and the average age being mid-thirties. Handguns are overwhelmingly the weapon of choice and workplaces are the most common locations, with schools in second place. The majority of mass shooting incidents occur on a weekday and in the late morning.

According to CNN, in the first four months of 2026 alone there were 24 school shootings in the USA. The attacks left 14 dead and 17 injured

The figures on gun violence in the United States make for grim reading. According to figures from the Pew Research Centre, 44,000 Americans died as a result of gun-related injuries in 2024. Gun-related deaths in America vastly outstrip those in other high-income countries and the pattern persists even in states with lower rates of firearm ownership.

Whilst mental health issues play a role in incidents of mass shooting, mental illness is rarely the predominant or sole explanation. Studies undertaken on perpetrators show that approximately 25-30 per cent had received a previous mental health diagnosis, with some having experienced suicidal thoughts, though most mass shooters had not previously been identified as being at risk of violent offences, nor had they been in institutional care. In addition, diagnoses of a notable psychotic illness occurred in a much smaller percentage, but the pattern of prior mental health diagnoses has led to questions about American healthcare and the apparent failure of crisis intervention.

Supporters of firearm ownership have suggested that violent individuals would find another way to commit mass murder. They point to the 1927 Bath Township School bombing in Michigan, when 38 children and 6 adults lost their lives to a dynamite attack by Andrew Kehoe. It remains the deadliest school attack in US history. Reformers take the opposite view, suggesting that lower rates of gun ownership and access can only save lives, using evidence from countries with strict gun laws and dramatically lower rates of massacres. In these cases, proponents of reform argue, killers might still commit localised crimes but would be unable to go on mass shooting rampages.

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the right of the people
being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infrin

Since 1966 there have been 511 mass shootings in the USA and in 2024, 44,000 Americans lost their lives to guns.

Armed with the Second Amendment

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed"

The Second Amendment to the US Constitution, ratified in 1791, was written amidst national fears following the American War of Independence, and guaranteed colonists the right to bear arms in order to form militias to protect the country. Thanks to Supreme Court challenges in the centuries since, the Second Amendment is now recognised as guaranteeing American citizens the right to bear arms for self-defence, not just the defence of the United States.

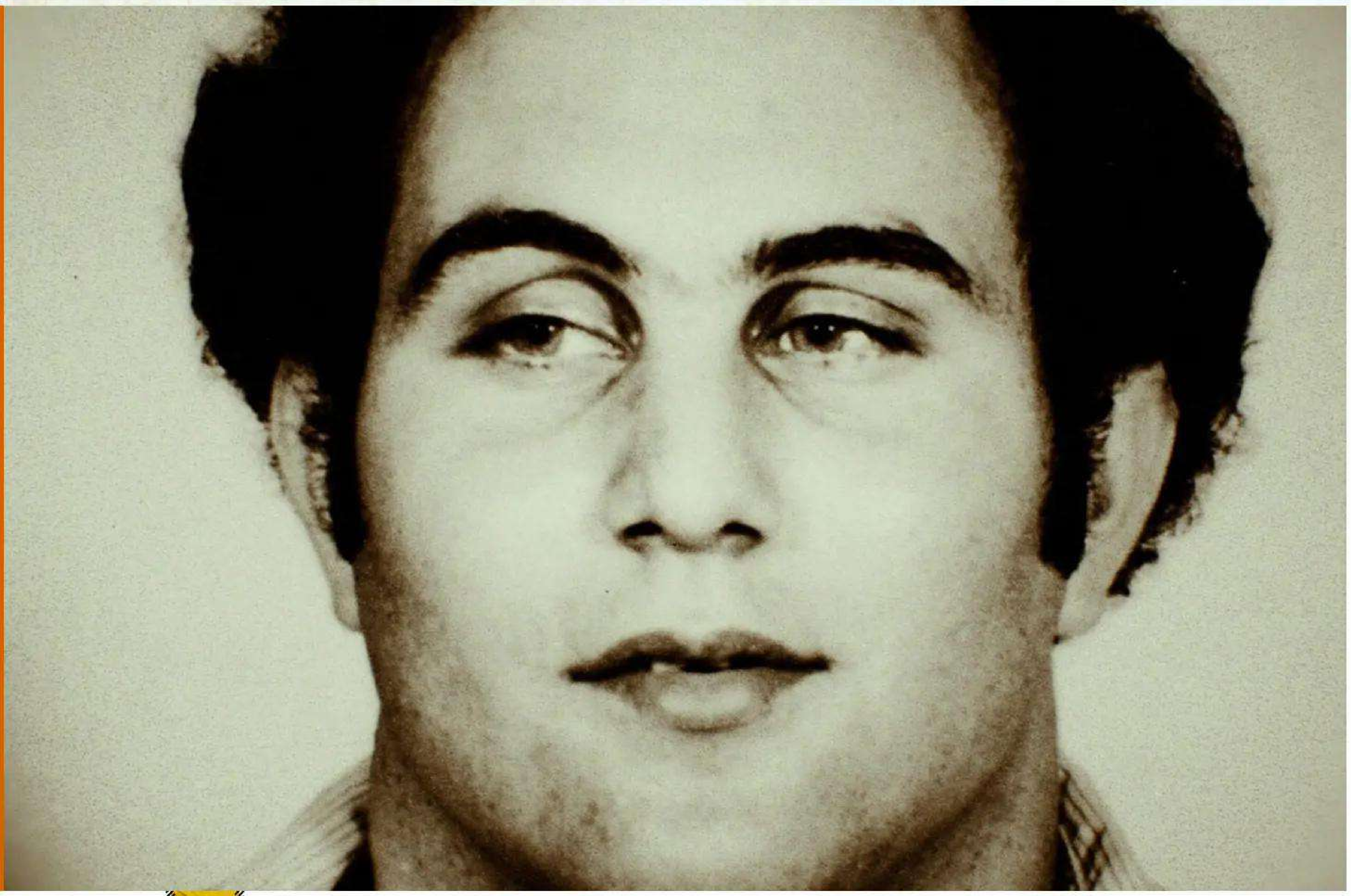
The Second Amendment is the foundation stone of modern American gun culture and has survived every effort to challenge or redefine it. Estimates of the number of privately owned firearms in the US place the total at close to 400 million and guns are deeply enmeshed in the American psyche. They are part of everyday life for some, reflected in hunting and sports, self-defence and modern pop culture. For some, the right to bear arms is a matter of national pride, for others national shame. With the spotlight on gun violence and mass shootings, it's likely to remain a matter of intense debate.

The Son of Sam

New York, New York
July 1976 - August 1977

Stories of devil dogs and paranoia brought terror to the New York night

Calling himself the Son of Sam, David Berkowitz terrorised New York City for a year in the mid-1970s. Armed with a .44 Bulldog revolver, he roamed the night, randomly targeting young couples as they sat in their parked cars. Berkowitz killed six people and wounded seven more during his attacks and inspired months of manhunts as fear gripped the city and the media whipped up a frenzied interest in his spree. Berkowitz was eventually apprehended thanks to a parking ticket and initially tried to claim that a demon had possessed his neighbour's dog and forced him to kill, a story he later admitted had been made up. Despite his efforts, Berkowitz received a sentence of 25 years to life; he remains behind bars today.



The Edmond Post Office Shooting

Edmond, Oklahoma
20 August 1986

Where "Going Postal" got its name

In just 15 minutes, Patrick Sherrill, a disgruntled US postal worker, claimed the lives of 14 coworkers and wounded six more before taking his own life. Sherrill strode into his Oklahoma workplace armed with two .45 calibre pistols and a .22 calibre revolver and opened fire, starting what became the deadliest workplace massacre in US history at the time. His employment history was littered with issues and Sherrill had shown worrying behaviour, which, coupled with his easy access to firearms, led to bloodshed. Sherrill's attack led the media to coin the phrase "going postal" and led the US Postal Service to institute a policy of employee screening and threat assessment and prevention programmes that led to similar initiatives across the nation.

The DC Sniper Attacks

Various locations across Maryland and Washington DC
2 October 2002 – 24 October 2002

The Beltway Snipers terrorised the capital

For three weeks in 2002 41-year-old John Allen Muhammad and 17-year-old Leo Boyd Malvo terrorised the Washington DC metropolitan area with a Bushmaster .223 calibre rifle and a specially modded Chevvy Caprice, which became their mobile sniper's nest. Targeting innocent people at random in petrol stations, schools and open public spaces, the two men killed 10 people and seriously injured three others, leaving the Death tarot card at the scene of their attacks. One day, they murdered five people across Maryland and Washington. Their reign of terror earned the men the nickname "the Beltway Snipers". The duo was arrested in October 2002 and Muhammad died by lethal injection seven years later. Malvo remains in prison, serving out a life sentence.

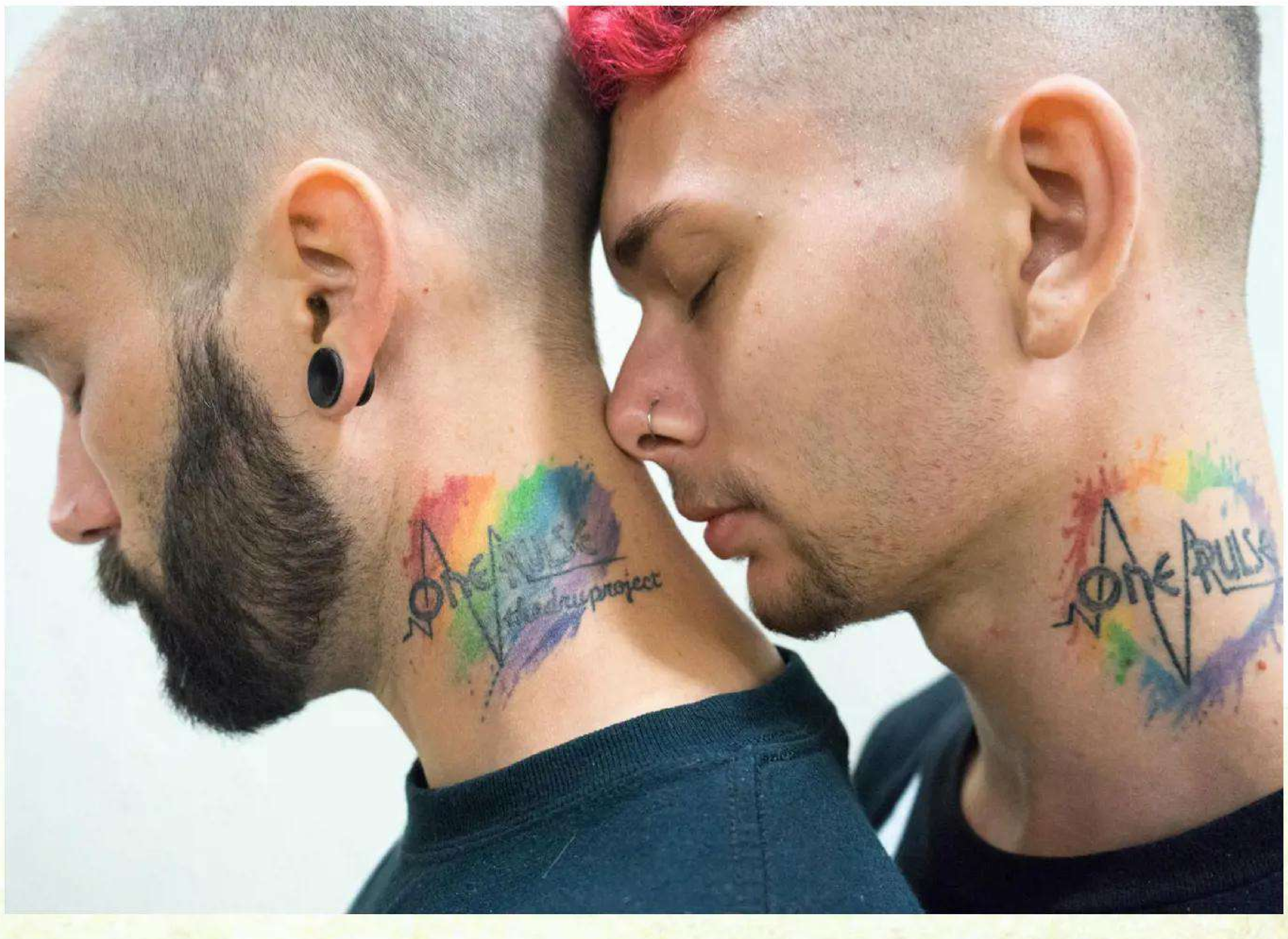
the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed
Pulse
FRANK HERNANDES
LEROY VALENTIN
JASON BENJAIN
FERNANDES
JOSAPHE
RAMON
JUSTICE
CHRISTOPHER ANDREW LEINONEN
JEAN
XAVIER
JUAN
LUIS
JORGE
REYES
RAMON
GERALDO
FRANKY
MENENDEZ
RODRIGUEZ
GUERRERO
ORTIZ-JIMENEZ
JIMMY DEJESUS VELAZQUEZ
BURTI
ANTONIO DAVON BROWN
EDWARD SOTOMAYOR

The Pulse Nightclub Shooting

Orlando, Florida
12 June 2016

A night of partying turned to horror in the Sunshine State

On the night of 12 June 2016, Pulse nightclub in Florida was packed with patrons, celebrating Latin Night with dancing, drinking and fun. Popular with LGBT locals, Pulse was destined to become the site of the deadliest mass shooting America had seen at the time. Omar Mateen entered the club armed with a 9mm Glock pistol and a Sig Sauer MCX rifle and opened fire on the dancers, killing 49 people and wounding 53. Mateen then took hostages who were forced to endure a stand-off lasting three hours, before the gunman was killed by police. The massacre exposed fundamental failures in a previous FBI investigation into Mateen, meaning that he was free to kill. Today, Pulse remains at the heart of the gun control debate in Florida.


onepulse
onepulse

Las Vegas Route 91 Harvest Festival Shooting

Las Vegas, Nevada
1 October 2017

In Vegas, a celebration of music turned to slaughter

22,000 people were gathered at the Route 91 Harvest music festival to enjoy some country tunes when Stephen Paddock opened fire from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay hotel. Using multiple modified semi-automatics, Paddock sprayed the terrified crowd with 1,000 rounds, killing 60 people and wounding hundreds. Today, the attack remains the deadliest massacre on US soil in modern times. A 64-year-old gambler, Paddock was known in Vegas as a high roller and took his own life before police could reach him, leaving his motive unknown. Paddock had modded his guns with a bump stock, making them able to fire at rates similar to a machine gun, and these were banned in the aftermath of the massacre. However, the Supreme Court overturned the ban, despite a new focus on gun control in the US.

LESSONS IN FEAR

America is in the grip of an epidemic of school shootings, leaving guns as the leading cause of death amongst American children

11:57:20 63 AM 04/20/99

America's Most Notorious School Shooting

Columbine High School
Columbine, Colorado

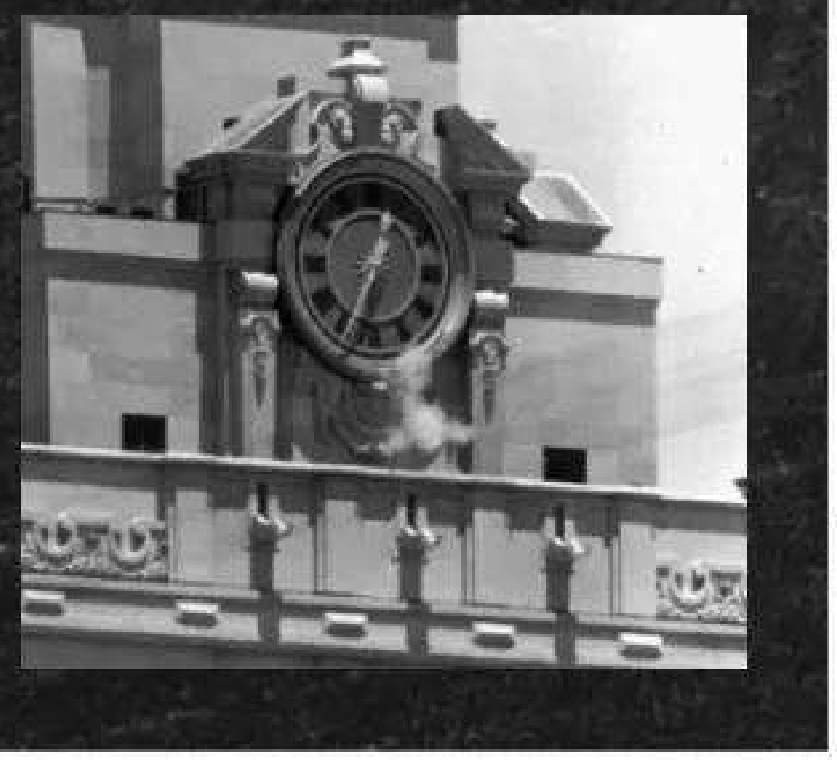
20 April 1999

The Columbine Massacre has become the most infamous school shooting the world has ever seen, igniting debate and inspiring more slaughter. It was carried out by seniors Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, who murdered 12 students and one teacher, as well as injuring more than 20 others at their high school in Littletown, before killing themselves. Columbine was a keystone moment in America's litany of school shootings. It has been the subject of countless books and documentaries and has become a global shorthand for the issue of gun violence in the United States.

America's First School Shooting

The University of Texas, Austin, Texas
1 August 1966

Charles Whitman, a 25-year-old former Marine and University of Texas student, murdered his wife and mother before climbing the university's 27-story tower and opening fire. In just over 90 minutes, he killed 16 people and one unborn child, before police killed him. Though few significant reforms followed in the wake of the attack, it would prove to be the first of several mass school shootings in America and opened a debate on armed response, access to firearms, and campus security. This was also the first mass shooting in modern America in any location, starting a worrying trend that would surge in years to come.



The Columbine Effect

After Columbine, a deluge of similar attacks took place

The Columbine Effect describes the impact of the Columbine Massacre on other perpetrators, who were inspired by the slaughter in Colorado to launch their own attacks. To date, at least 50 copycat attacks have taken place in schools worldwide, leading to more than 300 deaths and many more injuries. Often shooters described Harris and Klebold as heroes or martyrs and were inspired by them to leave manifestos before committing their crimes. The Columbine Effect is felt in schools every day, with security guards, lockdown protocols, metal detectors and more, which seek to keep students safe from the ongoing threat of violence.

America's Deadliest Elementary School Shooting

Sandy Hook Elementary School, Newtown, Connecticut

14 December 2012

20-year-old Adam Lanza began a day of slaughter by murdering his mother, before he travelled to Sandy Hook Elementary School. There he murdered 20 first grade students and six staff before taking his own life in what became the second-deadliest K-12 shooting in American history. Obsessed with Columbine, Lanza's crimes shocked the nation as the death toll of innocent young children shook citizens to their core. The Sandy Hook shooting had a profound impact on the issue of firearms in the US. Drills and crisis policies became critical in schools at all levels, as security intensified and schools were locked down during teaching hours. It also led to the foundation of Sandy Hook Promise, which encouraged prevention of reaction not only in schools, but in mental health care and management.

America's Deadliest School Shooting Overall

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia

16 April 2007

The deadliest school shooting in American history happened at the Virginia Polytechnic Insisute and State University, when Seung-Hui Cho, a 23-year-old senior, murdered 32 students and staff and injured 17 before committing suicide. Cho sent a manifesto to a national news desk in which he explicitly referred to the perpetrators of the Columbine Massacre as martyrs. Inspired by Columbine, his spree started in a dormitory before moving to a teaching building, where he chained the door shut to prevent his victims from making their escape. It left a permanent legacy in reforms of security and background checks for gun ownership, as well as forcing universities to put in place crisis protocols

America's Deadliest High School Shooting

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, Florida

14 February 2018

17 people died and 17 others were injured at the hands of 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, a former student who walked into his old high school and opened fire. Today Cruz is serving a life sentence for the massacre, which had been inspired by Cruz's glorification of the Columbine killers and videos featuring their crimes. Survivors of the slaughter launched the March for Our Lives initiative, leading millions of students in protests against gun violence all across America. As a result, Florita enacted new gun laws, raising the age of ownership and increasing waiting periods for gun purchases. School security across America was overhauled and students came to the fore as activists advocating for their own lives and safety.

> *"At least 50 Columbine copycat attacks have taken place worldwide"*

BLOOD on the STREETS

The accidents, tragedies, attacks and acts of terror that have shaped America

Written by Catherine Curzon

The history of America is filled with tragedy; some of the disasters changed the country, the others changed the world

A blackened Callery pear tree with a single living branch was found in the rubble at Ground Zero. "The Survivor Tree" was nursed back to health as a living memorial at the 9/11 Memorial Plaza

9/11

2001, New York

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 are the deadliest terrorist attacks the world have ever seen; the consequences have changed the world. Known globally as 9/11, the attacks unfolded when al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners and flew two of them into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, collapsing the towers and killing thousands. A third flight was crashed into the Pentagon, whilst passengers on the fourth plane desperately resisted the hijacking. That plane smashed into a field outside Pennsylvania, though it is believed it was likely heading for the Capitol or the White House. In total, 2,977 were killed in the attacks, with victims coming from over 90 countries; 6,000 others were injured and the cost of the attacks exceeded $100 billion. America responded to the attacks, which were masterminded by Osama bin Laden, by launching its War on Terror and reshaping US foreign policy for a generation. The Department of Homeland Security was created in the wake of the attack, with responsibility for civil defence and security, alongside a host of other duties.. Massive reforms took place in aviation security whilst in New York, where the Twin Towers once stood, two reflecting pools commemorate the dead.

© Getty Images, Alamy

Johnstown Flood

1889, Pennsylvania

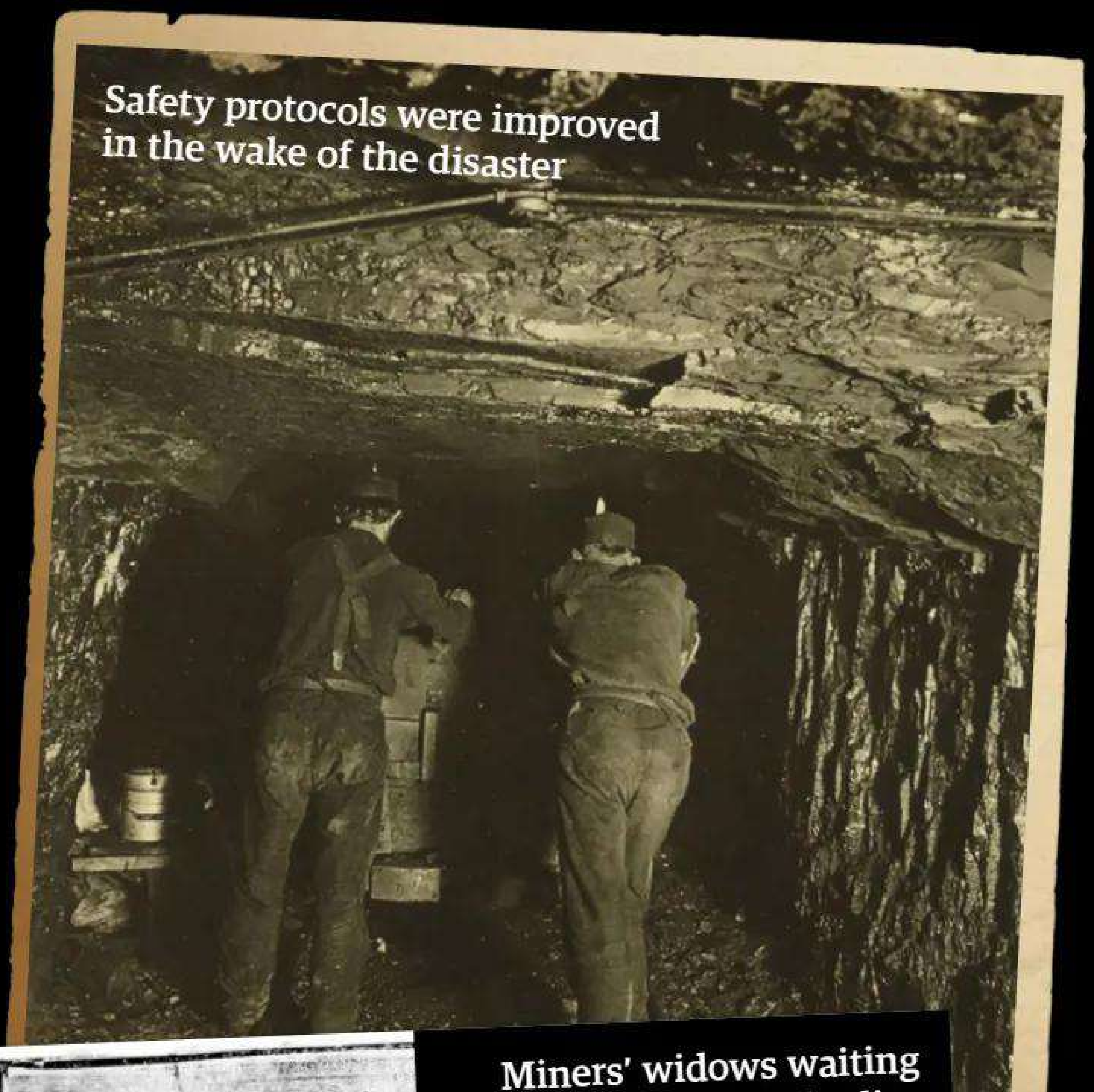
On 31 May 1889, the Little Conemaugh River was swollen by days of torrential rainfall. Lake Conemaugh overflowed its banks and the South Fork Dam, weakened by modifications made by the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club in the preceding decade, cracked into pieces. When the dam failed, 3.8 billion gallons of water hurtled into the valley with the destructive force and speed of Niagara Falls, thundering into Johnstown, a mill town that was home to 30,000 inhabitants. The wall of water hit Johnstown at just after four o'clock and wiped out the downtown area, smashing 1,600 homes into matchwood and spreading debris around 30 acres. In the aftermath, fires burned uncontrolled through the town, and more than 2,200 people lost their lives. Amongst the dead were 99 families, nearly 400 children, and over 750 unidentified victims of the disaster. Aid was provided by the American Red Cross under the guidance of 67-year-old Clara Barton, who established shelters and access to medical care, bringing the organisation to national prominence. The country club was accused of negligence but escaped without penalty. Today, the Johnstown dead are remembered by a memorial and museum, which tells their tragic story to new generations.

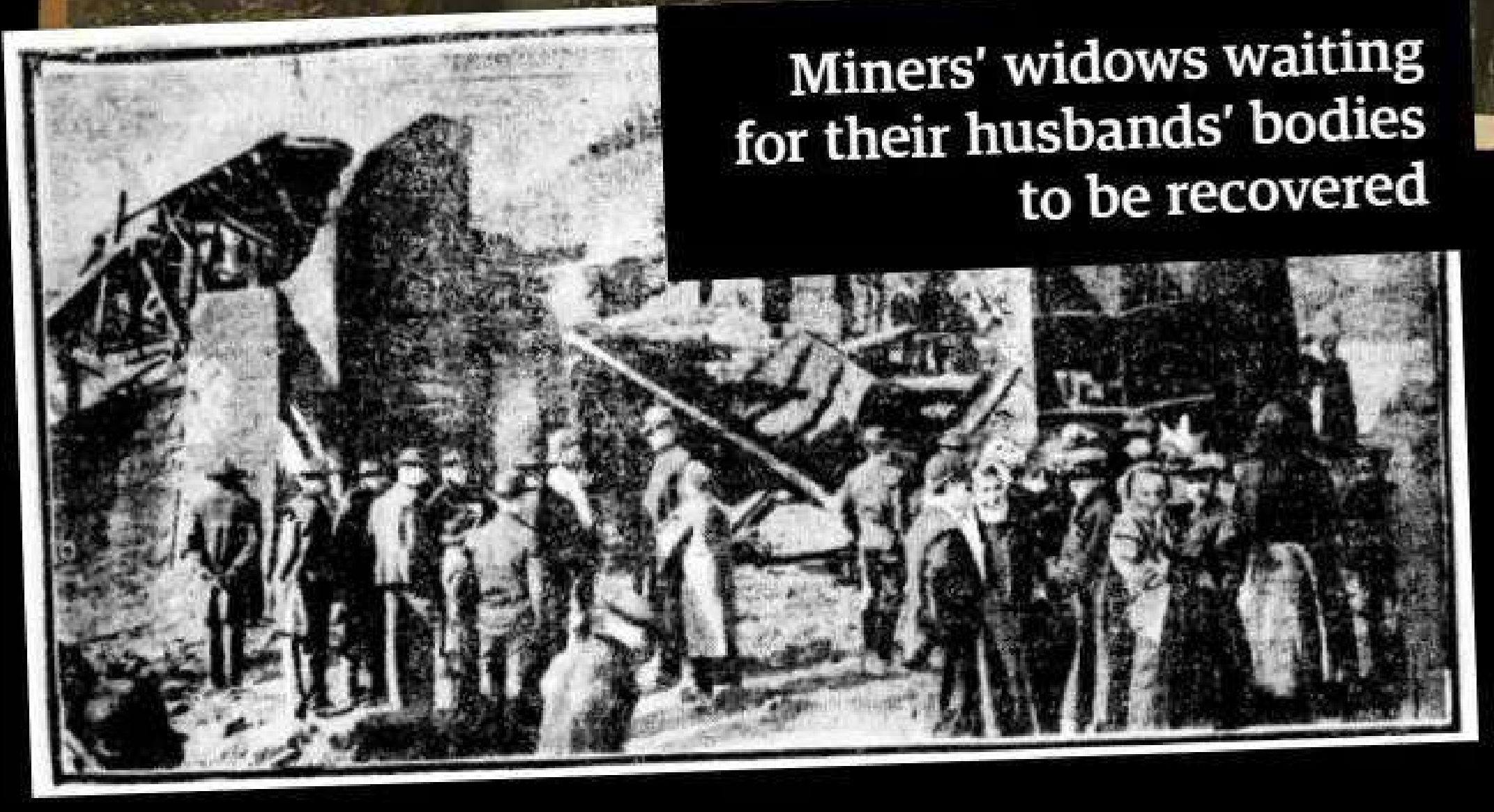
Johnstown's downtown area was completely wiped out

The Monongah Mine Disaster

1907, West Virginia

On 6 December 1907, America experienced perhaps its worst mining disaster. At 10:28 am, an explosion occurred in two of Fairmont Coal Company's mines. According to official figures, there were 420 men in the two mines at the time of the explosion, though it was common practice for the workers to take their children and other relatives into the mine to help, and so the true figure is likely to have been closer to 500. The initial explosion killed most of the workers immediately. A second explosion damaged the ventilation system that allowed fresh air to circulate, and blocked the entrance. Without the entrance or ventilation, the mine filled with poisonous gas and suffocated those who had survived the first blast. Over 350 miners died. The fallout from the disaster caused public outcry, and led to the passing of the 1910 Organic Act, establishing the United States Bureau of Mines, a government body dedicated to improving the safety of mines.


Safety protocols were improved in the wake of the disaster


Miners' widows waiting for their husbands' bodies to be recovered

Thousands of workers were affected

The Hawk's Nest Tunnel Tragedy

1930s, West Virginia

In 1930, construction began on a 4.8-kilometre (three-mile) long tunnel in southwest Virginia. The project attracted thousands of men looking for opportunities after the effects of the Great Depression. Around 75 per cent of these workers were Black. The tunnel was drilled into Gauley Mountain, a sandstone mountain, which kicked up large amounts of silica dust, severely affecting the worker's lungs and sight. Soon after construction began, the young workers began to get sick in vast numbers. After six months' work, 80 per cent of the workers had sickened, died, or walked off the job. Although hundreds of white men suffered from silicosis as a result of the mine, conditions for the Black workers was worse still. Testimonies from former Black workers in 1936 record that they were denied breaks for fresh air and if they got sick, they were forced from their sickbeds at gunpoint. More than 700 workers died as a result of the silica dust, and the public reaction to the tragic events led to the creation of the Air Hygiene Foundation. Silicosis was soon made a compensable condition by the US Department of Labor.

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

1911, New York

One of America's deadliest industrial episodes came on 25 March 1911 at the Triangle Waist Company, which occupied the 8th floor of the Asch Building in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. At 4.40 pm, a fire broke out in the textile company, probably due to a discarded match or cigarette which ignited scraps. It swiftly became an inferno, which raged through the factory where approximately 500 workers, mostly women and girls, earned a living. For those caught in the conflagration, there was no escape. Doors to stairwells were kept locked to prevent theft and the fire escape collapsed beneath the weight of the panicking workers. When the fire brigade arrived, they found that their ladders could only reach the sixth floor of the building. For workers trapped on the ninth floor by the rising flames, there was to be no escape. Dozens of workers were killed by smoke or the flames and some jumped to their deaths in a desperate attempt to escape. In less than half an hour 146 people perished, 123 of them women and girls, and 78 were injured. Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, the owners of the company, were acquitted of manslaughter at the subsequent trial and received generous insurance payouts for their loss, but the public were outraged. The tragedy led to the formation of the New York Factory Investigating Commission, which implemented dozens of new laws to benefit workers, including new inspection standards and stricter fire safety regulations, and laid the foundations of modern labour laws. Today, the site of the tragedy is a National Historic Landmark.

Firefighters couldn't reach the upper floors

Ludlow Massacre

1914, Colorado

In 1914, the Colorado Coalfield War saw 10,000 coal miners who were members of the United Mine Workers of America go out on strike against the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, owned by the powerful Rockefeller family. In what would become one of America's most notorious industrial episodes, the strikers were protesting for better wages, safe working conditions, and to be free of company control on their housing and communities. With strikers evicted from company-owned homes, approximately 1,200 men and their families, many immigrants, were living in a tent city outside Ludlow, Colorado. They were under constant observation and torment from the National Guard and armed security operatives in the pay of the mine owners. On 20 April 1914, their leader, Louis Tikas, was meeting with militia Major Pat Hamrock as the militia positioned machine guns on the hills outside the camp, anticipating unrest. Seeing this, the colonists believed they were about to be attacked and someone, neither side knew who, fired a shot. With each side believing themselves to be under attack, a gunfight broke out. Tikas was killed and the colonists fled for the hills as the colony burned; 11 children and 2 women died in the fire, suffocated as they hid from the bullets in pits beneath the tents. At least 19 people died in the massacre, with many more casualties being reported in retaliatory attacks in the following days. The tragedy caused an outcry in America and shone the spotlight on industrial safety, lending the labour movement a new impetus and ushering in mine safety reforms as well as new child labour laws and regulations to enfore the eight-hour workday. Today, the site is a National Historic Landmark memorialising the unthinkable price some paid for workers' rights.

The protest site became a literal powder keg

© Getty Images, Alamy

Texas City Disaster

1947, Texas

The huge blaze was visible for miles

The deadliest industrial accident in American history happened on 16 April 1947 in Texas City, a central point for oil and chemical refining and shipping on Galveston Bay, itself a major hub for oil refining and chemical shipping. At 8.00 am, a fire broke out in the hold of the SS Grandcamp, which was carrying a cargo of more than 2,000 tons of ammonium nitrate fertiliser. Efforts to extinguish the flames proved vain and approximately an hour later, the Grandcamp's volatile cargo exploded in a mushroom cloud that threw the ship's enormous 1.5-ton anchor nearly two miles and sent a massive tidal wave plunging across the port. The flaming wreckage of the ship plummeted into oil tanks and the Monsanto chemical plant, killing 145 people, as well as showering the SS High Flyer, itself loaded with ammonium nitrate and sulphur, in the early hours of the following day. Nearly 600 people died in the disaster and thousands were injured. Among the casualties were 27 of Texas City's 28 volunteer firemen and many locals and workers who had gathered to watch the fire. Along with the port more than 500 homes were obliterated, and the repair bill was in excess of $1 billion dollars today. The disaster led to major reforms in regulations for handling and storing hazardous cargo and new emergency protocols, aimed at preventing another, similar tragedy.

Pearl Harbor

1941, Hawaii

The Attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 was a decisive moment in world history, when the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked the US Pacific Fleet, which lay at anchor at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. The devastating assault on what was known as Battleship Row lasted for just under two hours, but claimed 19 US ships, nearly 200 aircraft and the lives of 2,403 Americans. The attack brought the United States into World War II. At 7.48 am Hawaiian time, the first of two waves of Japanese aircraft were launched from carriers. The onslaught was brutal and entirely unexpected, catching the Americans on the hop and leaving them no time to mount a defence. More than 1,000 men died on the USS Arizona alone when the ship's magazine exploded, and as news reached the USA, the people called for action. The day after the attack, President Franklin D Roosevelt gave an address to Congress regarding the "date which will live in infamy", and the US declared war on Japan. The "sleeping giant" had awakened, and the world would never be the same again.

The unprovoked attack brought the USA into World War II

> *"More than 1,000 men died on the USS Arizona alone when the ship's magazine exploded"*

More than 10 million gallons of crude oil was spilled into the ocean

Joseph Hazelwood, the captain of the Exxon Valdez, had been drinking vodka before he left the bridge shortly prior to the accident

Exxon Valdez Oil Spill

1989, Alaska

Just after midnight on 24 March 1989, the Exxon Valdez super tanker struck Bligh Reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound, tearing open its cargo tanks and spilling more than 10 million gallons of crude oil into the water. The oil devastated 1,300 miles of coastline and polluted more than 10,000 square miles of ocean, causing unfathomable damage to the healthy and so- far unspoiled ecosystem there. More than a quarter of a million seabirds perished, alongside thousands of other animals, including bald eagles and otters. Other species saw substantial long-term decline and billions of unhatched fish eggs were destroyed. The cleanup cost Exxon billions of dollars and they were eventually hit with a $1 billion fine, the largest environmental punishment ever at the time. As a result of the tragedy, the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 came into existence, alongside a raft of reforms to oil tankers and disaster preparedness plans. To this day, scientists still find traces of oil in Prince William Sound, where the wildlife populations are still recovering.

The Santa Barbara Oil Spill

1969, California

The Santa Barbara Oil Spill on 28 January 1969 was a turning point in America's relationship with the environment. A blowout happened on Union Oil's Platform A, six miles off the California coast in the Dos Cuadras Offshore Oil Field. A huge amount of oil and gas poured out of the well over 11 days and fractured the seabed, leading to natural oil leaks that continued for nearly 12 months. More than four million gallons of oil flooded the Santa Barbara Channel across more than 800 square miles, polluting 100 miles of coastline and killing an estimated 3,700 seabirds, as well as marine life ranging from fish to dolphins and elephant seals. Images of the suffering horrified the world and devastated the local area. So intense was the outrage that environmental activism came to the forefront of the debate campaigning successfully for new, powerful legislation aimed at protecting the environment against such devastating accidents.

Thousands of seabirds died in the spill

Oklahoma City Bombing

1995, Oklahoma

Just after 9:00 am on 19 April 1995, a bomb hidden in a rental truck detonated right outside the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. The bomb was made of thousands of pounds of ammonium nitrate fertiliser, diesel fuel, and nitromethane, and had been parked directly beneath the daycare centre.

The blast tore through more than 300 buildings in a 16-block radius and left a massive crater behind it. Amongst the 168 killed were 19 children, 15 of whom had been in daycare, and 680 people suffered injuries. As far as 30 miles away, people felt the explosion, and earthquake-measuring systems recorded it as a 3.0 magnitude quake. The bomb was planted by extremist Timothy McVeigh, a US Army veteran with a hatred of the federal government. He was arrested during a routine traffic stop and later sentenced to death for the bombing. Terry Nichols, who helped McVeigh with the plot, was given 161 life sentences without parole, whilst McVeigh was executed in 1997. In the aftermath of the deadliest domestic terror attack America had then seen, government workplaces saw massive increases in security, with new reforms offering workers a better sense of safety for themselves and their families.

The sacale of the attack was unprecedented

ALLIED STEEL CRANE RENTAL

©Getty Images, Alamy

The Wrath of Mother Nature

Nature isn't just a cute Instagram backdrop or pithy meme about touching grass. Sometimes, Mother Nature has teeth – and she's not afraid to use them

Written by Icy Sedgwick

Earth has always suffered from natural disasters. Vesuvius' eruption in 79 CE buried Pompeii and Herculaneum for centuries. The Black Death swept across Europe and Asia in the 14th century, killing thousands. Space scientists now scan the skies for potentially dangerous asteroids. Our fascination with disasters helps to explain the popularity of Hollywood films like *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), *Earthquake* (1974), *Deep Impact* (1998), and *Pompeii* (2014). Yes, these films can be entertaining and feature a special effects bonanza. Yet natural disasters have real and devastating consequences for those caught up in them. Whether they're extreme weather events, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or pandemics, disasters are killers.

The Dust Bowl

1930s - Multi-regional

A series of droughts in the 1930s hit the southern central United States. One drought started before the region recovered from the previous one. AP reporter Robert Geiger named the area the Dust Bowl in 1935 following the notorious dust storms raging across these states. Severe soil erosion was to blame, partly caused by the homesteaders' farming methods. First grasslands, the Great Plains ended up overgrazed by cattle or covered in wheat instead of the native prairie grasses. The loss of this natural covering left the plains susceptible to harsh winds. The winds eroded the soil and caused dust storms. The storms were so bad in places that dust coated farms in drifts like snow. By 1937, 21 per cent of the rural Great Plains families needed federal emergency relief. Some families abandoned their homesteads and fled west to start new lives. The Dust Bowl came to represent the harsh economic conditions and daily hardship across the United States in the 1930s in the aftermath of 1929's Wall Street Crash. The Dust Bowl phenomenon only ended when rainfall returned to normal in 1941.

Dust storm approaching Stratford, Texas

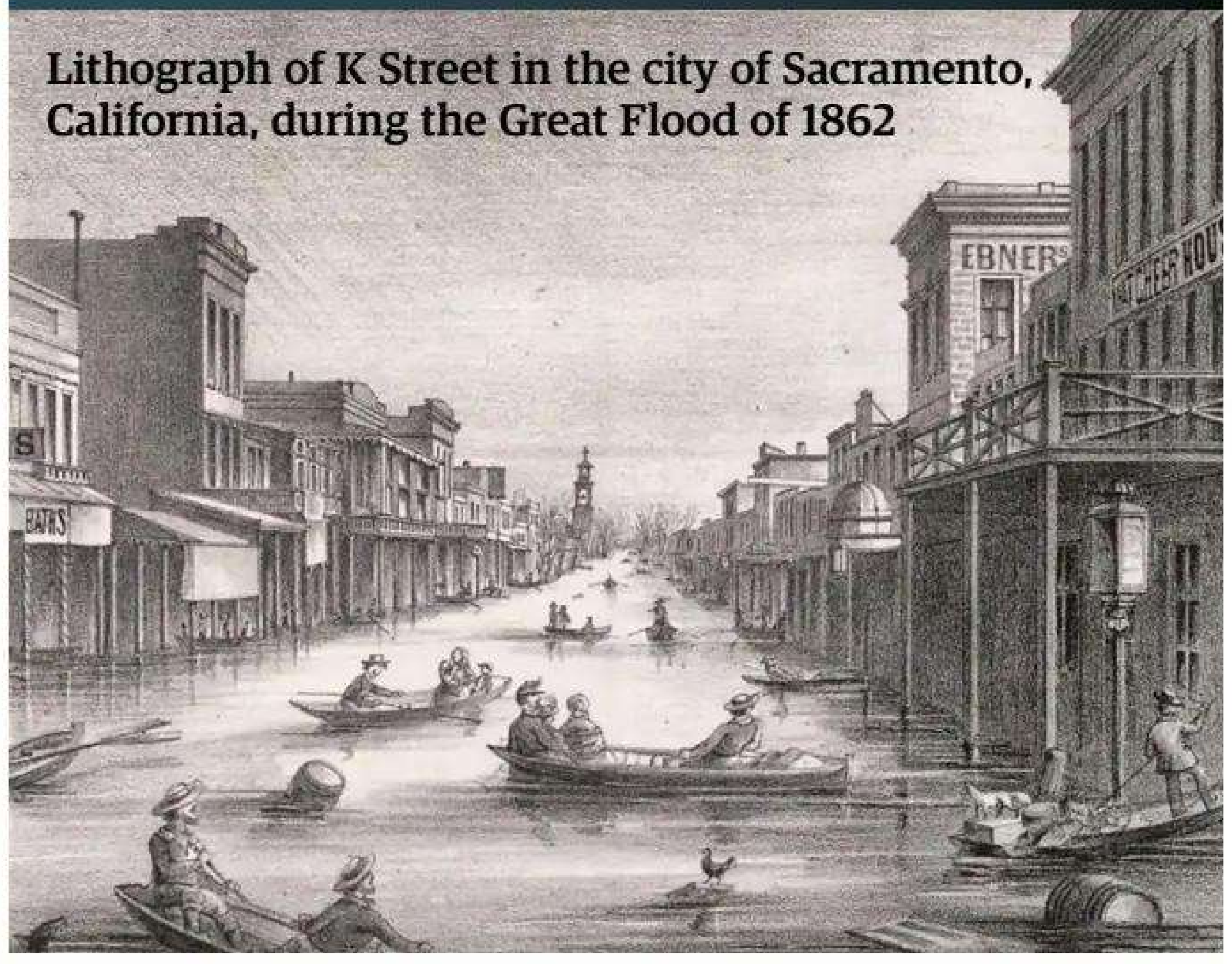
Severe dust storms known as "Black Blizzards" frequently turned day into night. Black Sunday on 14 April 1935 was the deadliest, directly causing at least 17 deaths

© Alamy

THE GREAT FLOOD

1862 - Multi-regional

November 1861 into January 1862 saw weeks of endless snow and rain. They caused a flood that affected the vast area between the Columbia River in Oregon in the north, San Diego in California in the south, and Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona in the east. Experts estimate that the storms and flood that followed caused the equivalent of $3 billion of damage (in 2021 money). They killed at least 4,000 people and 200,000 cattle in California alone. Survivors clung to roofs and trees, waiting for rescue by those with boats. The damage in California included the loss of wheat fields, bankrupting the state. The devastation led to improvements in flood control and water management in California.


Lithograph of K Street in the city of Sacramento, California, during the Great Flood of 1862

Peshtigo Fire

1871 - Wisconsin

On 8 October 1871, railway workers had been clearing land ready to lay new tracks. A bush fire broke out and, following the incredibly dry summer, grew – and spread – fast. It swallowed up all oxygen, and some of those attempting to outrun the fire burst into flames. The inferno raged across northeast Wisconsin. It razed the city of Peshtigo in just an hour, killing 800 people. It also consumed 16 other towns, causing an estimated $4.5 billion of damage (in 2026 money). Experts debate the number of deaths caused by the fire, but it is likely that between 1,500 and 2,000 people died. The fire burned around 1.5 million acres of land. Fewer people have heard of the Peshtigo Fire because it happened on the same night as the devastating Great Chicago Fire. Despite that, the Peshtigo Fire was more deadly.

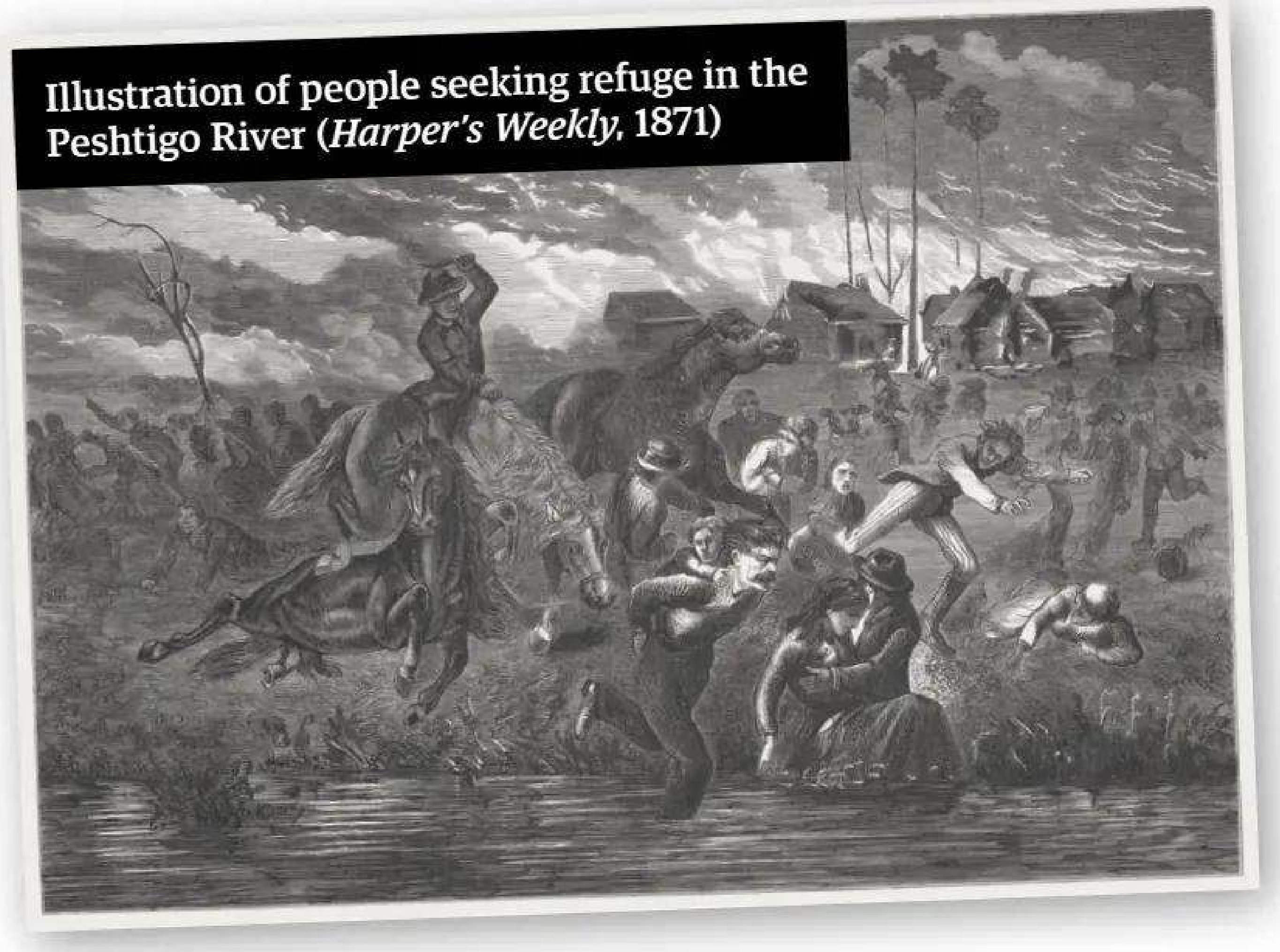
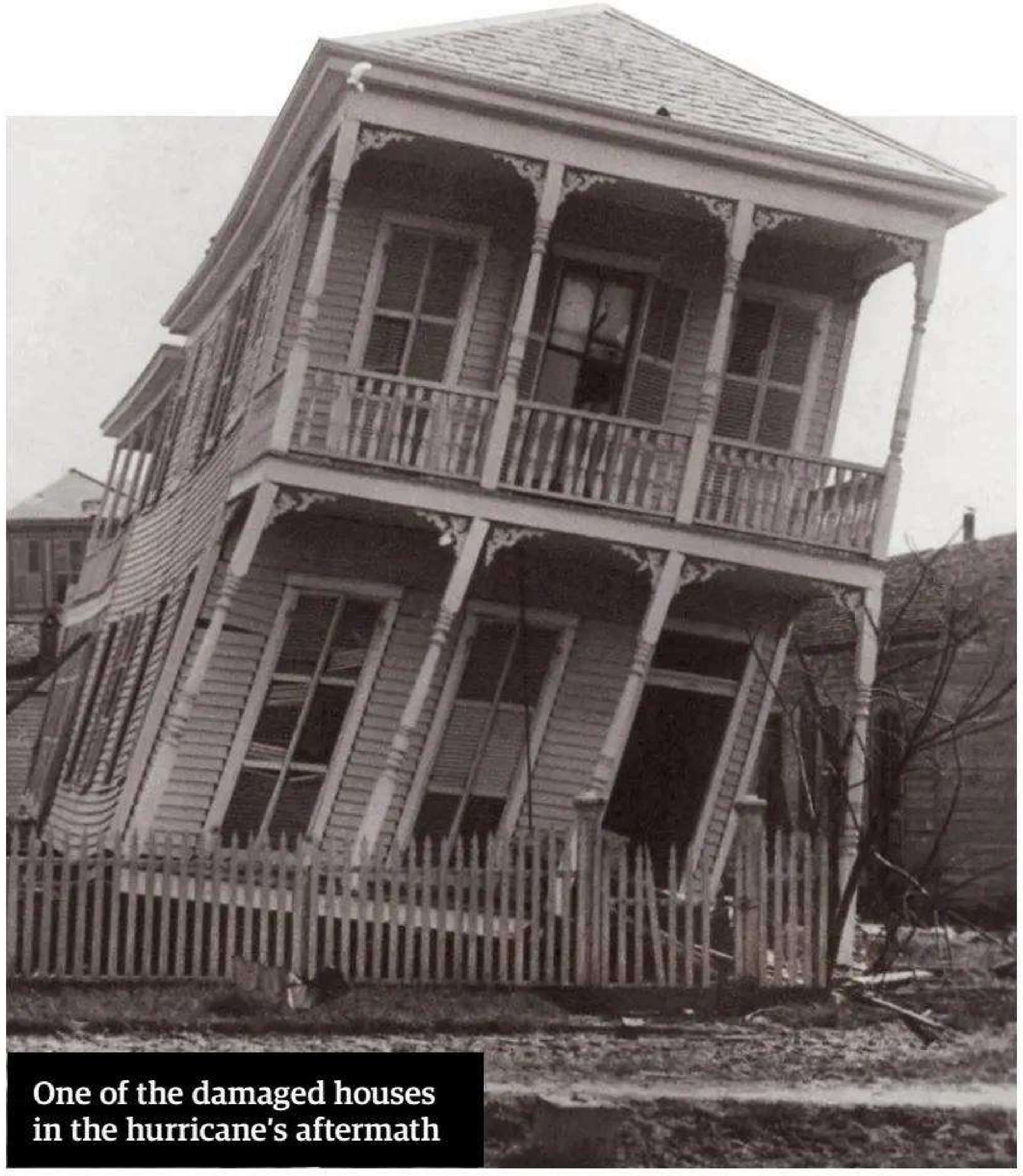


Illustration of people seeking refuge in the Peshtigo River (*Harper's Weekly*, 1871)

The Galveston Hurricane

1900 - Texas

In early September 1900, a tropical hurricane loitered in the Gulf of Mexico. The people of Galveston, Texas, found themselves under a storm warning. On 8 September, only the increasing wind and worsening rain betrayed the hurricane's presence. Conditions deteriorated and local Weather Bureau official Isaac M Cline drove around town advising locals to evacuate. Few did. When the storm made landfall, it was too late to flee. The hurricane ripped through buildings near the beach like they were made of paper. With winds between 84 mph and 120 mph, the hurricane also brought a storm wave onshore. The hurricane killed between 6,000-8,000 inhabitants, and destroyed much of the city.


One of the damaged houses in the hurricane's aftermath

"When the storm made landfall, it was too late to flee"

Looking down Sacramento St towards the fire

San Francisco Earthquake and Fire

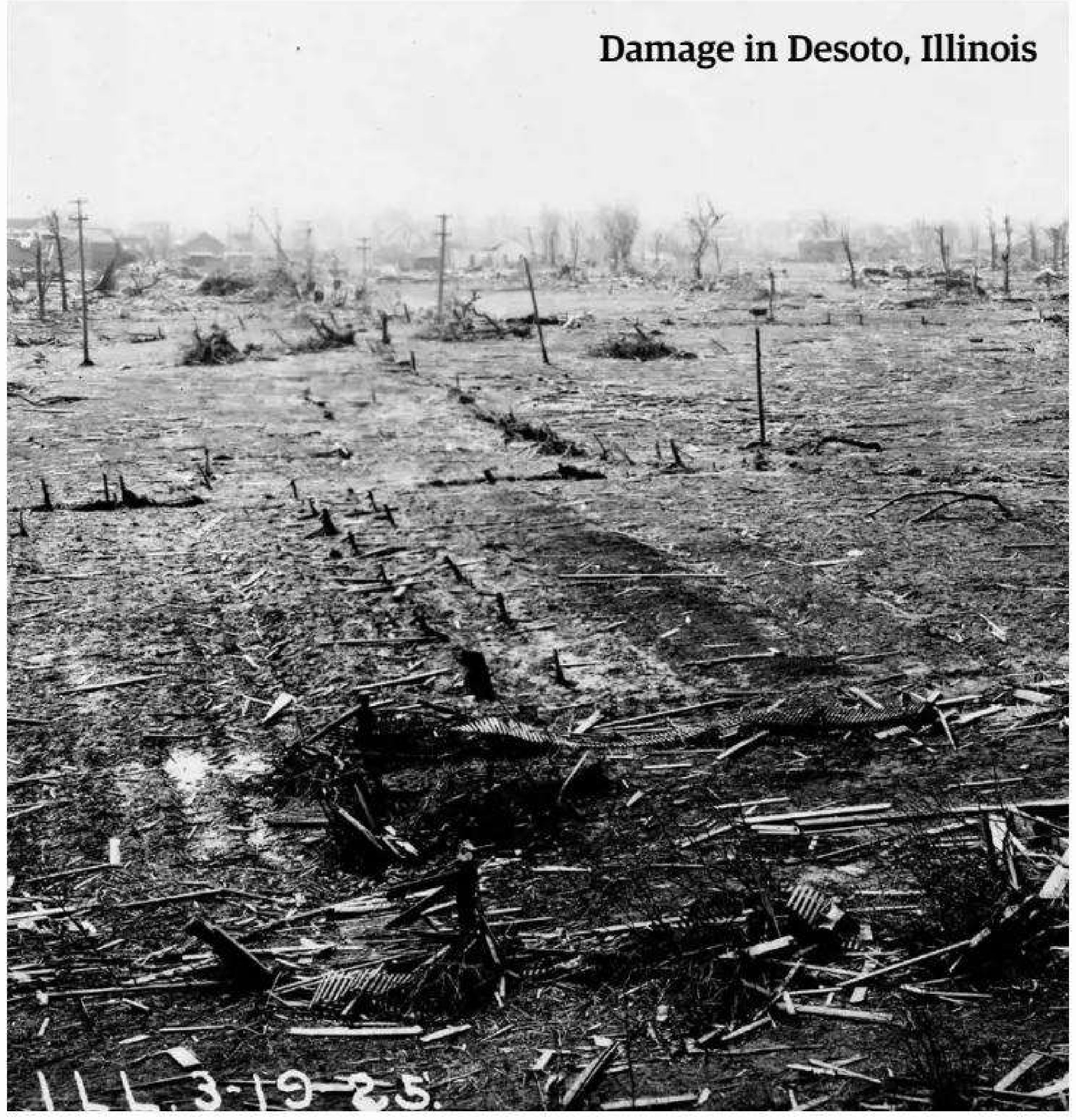
1906 - California

At 5:12 am on 18 April 1906, the San Andreas fault – the boundary between the Pacific and North American tectonic plates – slipped. It caused a foreshock that announced the incoming quake in the San Francisco Bay area. 20 seconds later, the 7.9-magnitude earthquake shook the city for almost a minute. Witnesses described the sound as being like 10,000 lions roaring at once. People felt the earthquake as far north as southern Oregon, and as far inland as Nevada. Following the quake, rampant fires broke out. The inferno blazed across four square miles for four days, until rain put out the flames. While the initial death toll hovered at 700, experts now place the number closer to 3,000. The disaster made around 250,000 people homeless. When the city was rebuilt, authorities followed plans to make it resistant to earthquakes and fire. Later studies of the earthquake overturned existing seismic theories. The earthquake remains the deadliest in US history.

Tri-State Tornado

1925 - Missouri, Illinois, Indiana

The Great Tri-State Tornado sprang to life on 18 March 1925, northwest of Ellington, Missouri, as part of a storm supercell. It was so powerful that debris from the damaged town of Sedgewickville turned up almost 50 miles away. The tornado tore a 62mph swath across Missouri before continuing its rampage across southern Illinois. 541 people died in the space of forty minutes. The tornado demolished towns in its path before moving into southern Indiana. It finally ran out of steam south of Petersburg, Indiana. During its lifespan, it killed almost 700 people and caused millions of dollars of damage. According to the National Weather Service, analyses in the early 2000s traced a 235-mile trail of destruction across three states.

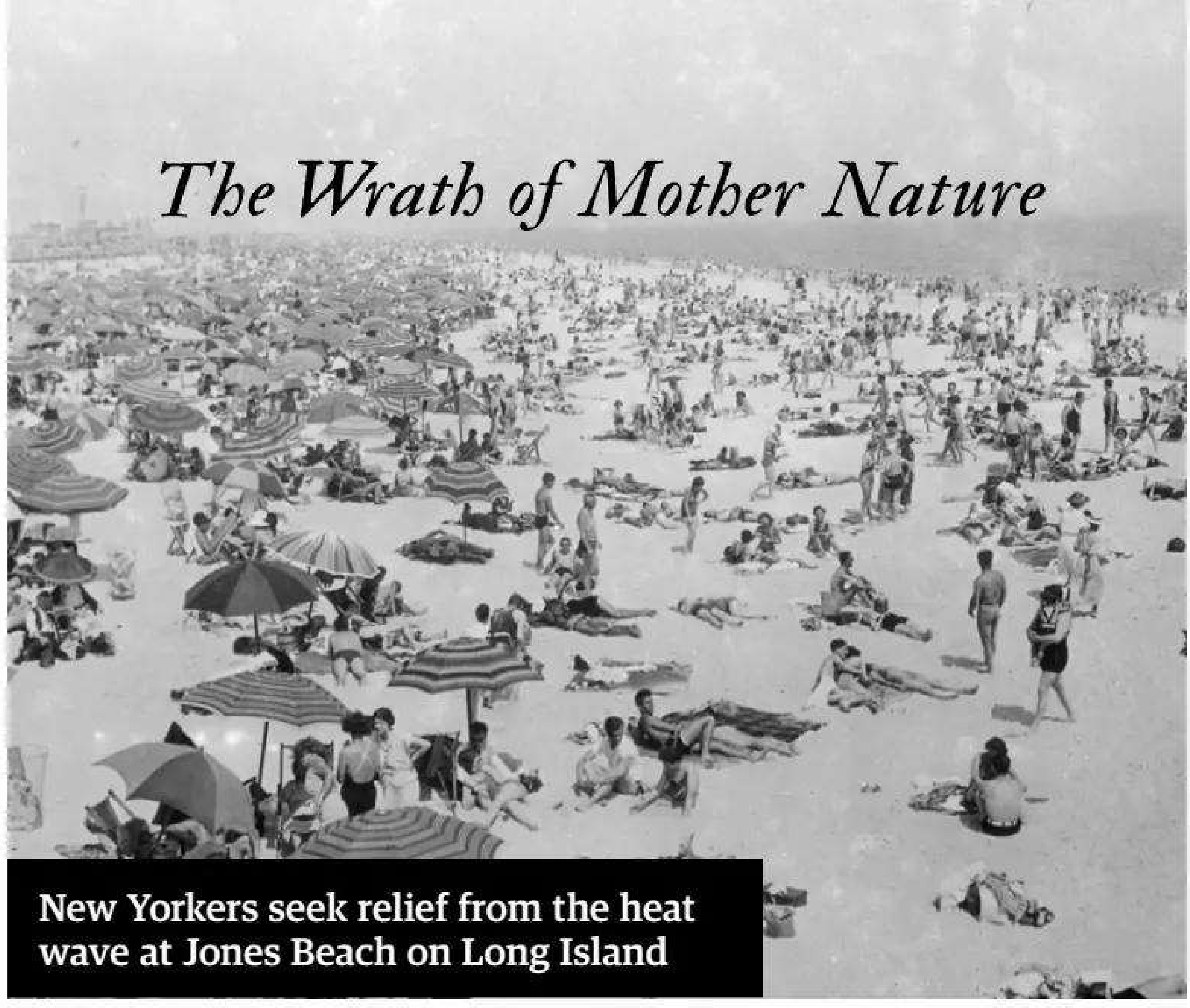


Damage in Desoto, Illinois

Hurricane Katrina

2005 - Multi-regional

Hurricane Katrina first formed in the Caribbean on 23 August 2005. It grew to become a Category 1 storm in Miami. By 27 August, the hurricane had grown to Category 3. It made landfall on 29 August on the Louisiana coast, heading for New Orleans. Sustaining wind speeds of 120 mph, Katrina moved towards Mississippi, but New Orleans was not spared as officials had hoped. Ageing levees failed, with parts of the city flooded worse than others. Around 80 per cent of the city was underwater. At least 1,200 people died after 100,000 residents were unable to leave, and the storm caused around $108 billion in property damage. Hurricane Katrina's high winds and three-storey high storm surge also killed 238 people in Mississippi and left almost 60,000 homes uninhabitable. The slow government response and lack of aid in the immediate aftermath drew international criticism, and is still impacting the area many years later.



New Yorkers seek relief from the heat wave at Jones Beach on Long Island

North American Heatwave

1936 - Multi-regional

The droughts of the Dust Bowl also contributed to the July 1936 Heat Wave. The record-breaking heat wave hit the Great Plains, Great Lakes, and Upper Midwest. The lack of vegetation on the plains also left the arid landscape unable to absorb excess heat. Around 5,000 people died of dehydration and heatstroke as a direct result of the heat wave. People slept on roofs or in public parks in a bid to escape the heat indoors. According to the National Weather Service, Bloomington, Indiana, recorded a record temperature of 114°F on 15 July. The temperatures shot so high that temperatures during 2025's record heatwave couldn't break the 1936 records.

The hospital ship USNS Comfort arrives in Manhattan on 30 March 2020

COVID-19

2020 - Nationwide

The COVID-19 pandemic began in Wuhan, China, following an outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 in December 2019. The disease jumped the species barrier from bats to humans, also seen during the 2012 MERS outbreak (which began in camels). COVID-19 arrived in the US on 13 January 2020, but by 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation had declared the outbreak a pandemic. Hospitals struggled to cope with the number of patients, and panic buying caused food shortages. The government responded with lockdowns and a shift towards working from home. By the end of 2022, epidemiologist John P. A. Ioannidis suggested that around 70 per cent of the global population had had at least one COVID infection. By the end of 2023, the CDC reported that over one million Americans had died from COVID. The disease continues to infect and disable people around the world. This is the natural disaster with the biggest ongoing impact.

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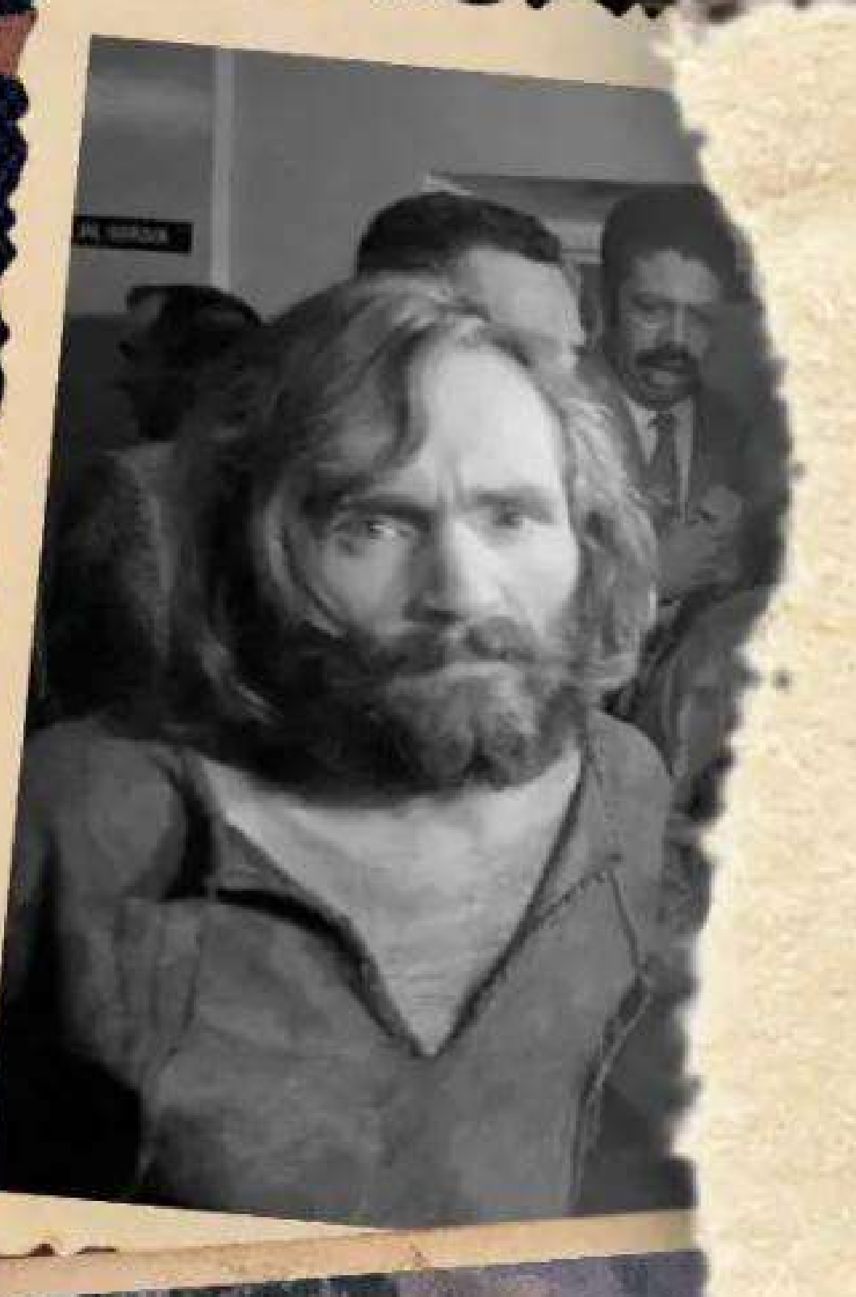

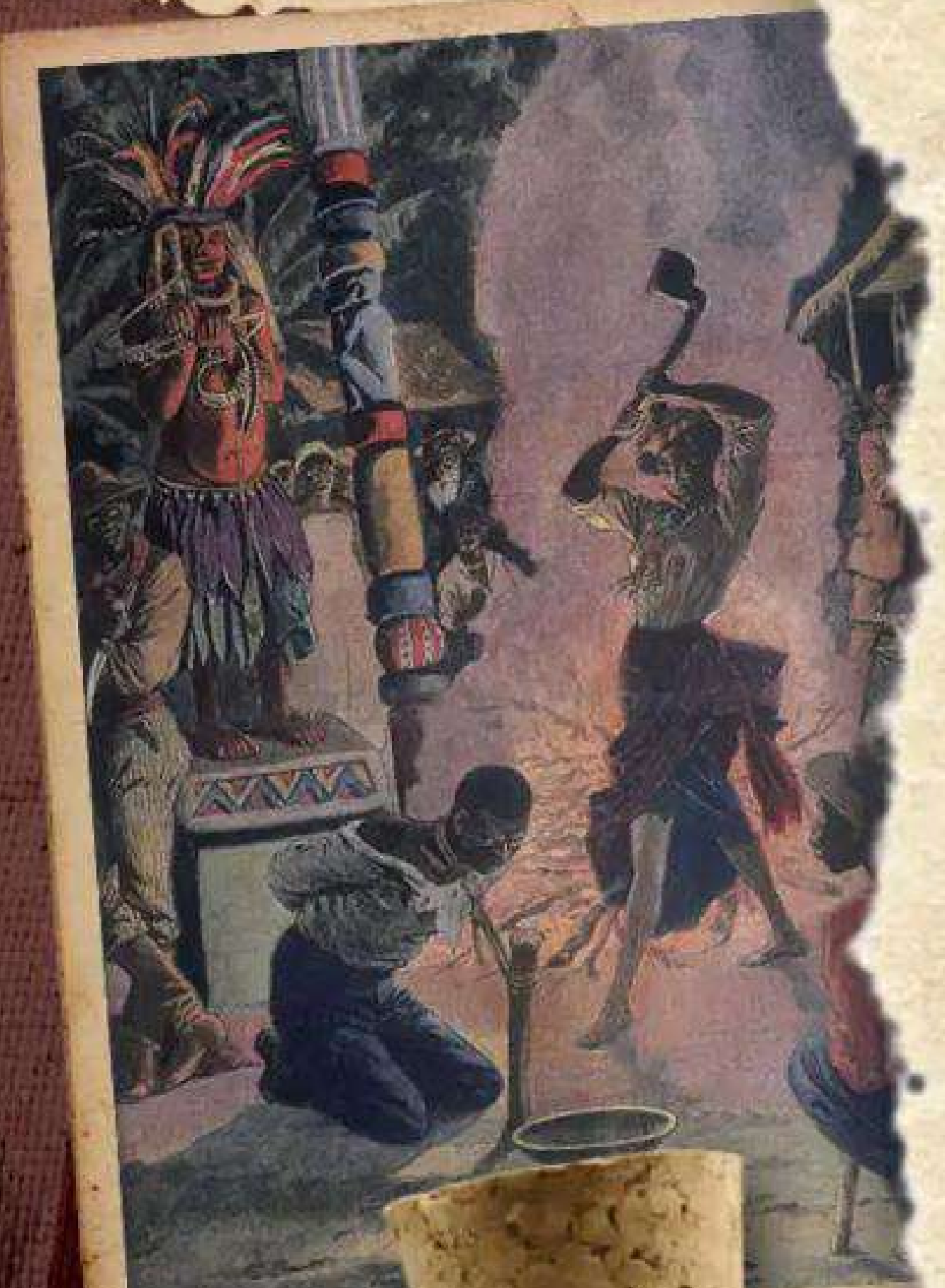

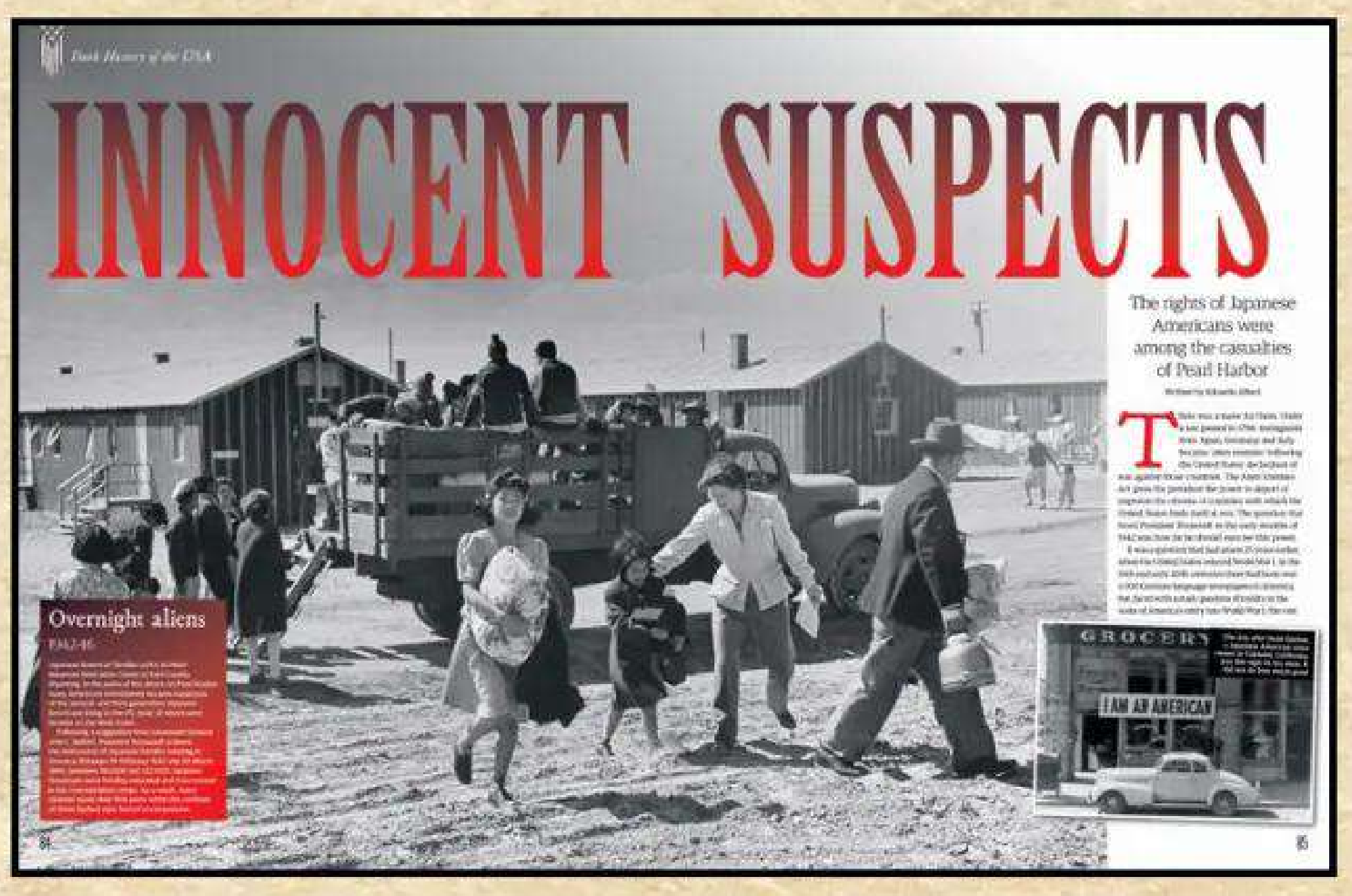

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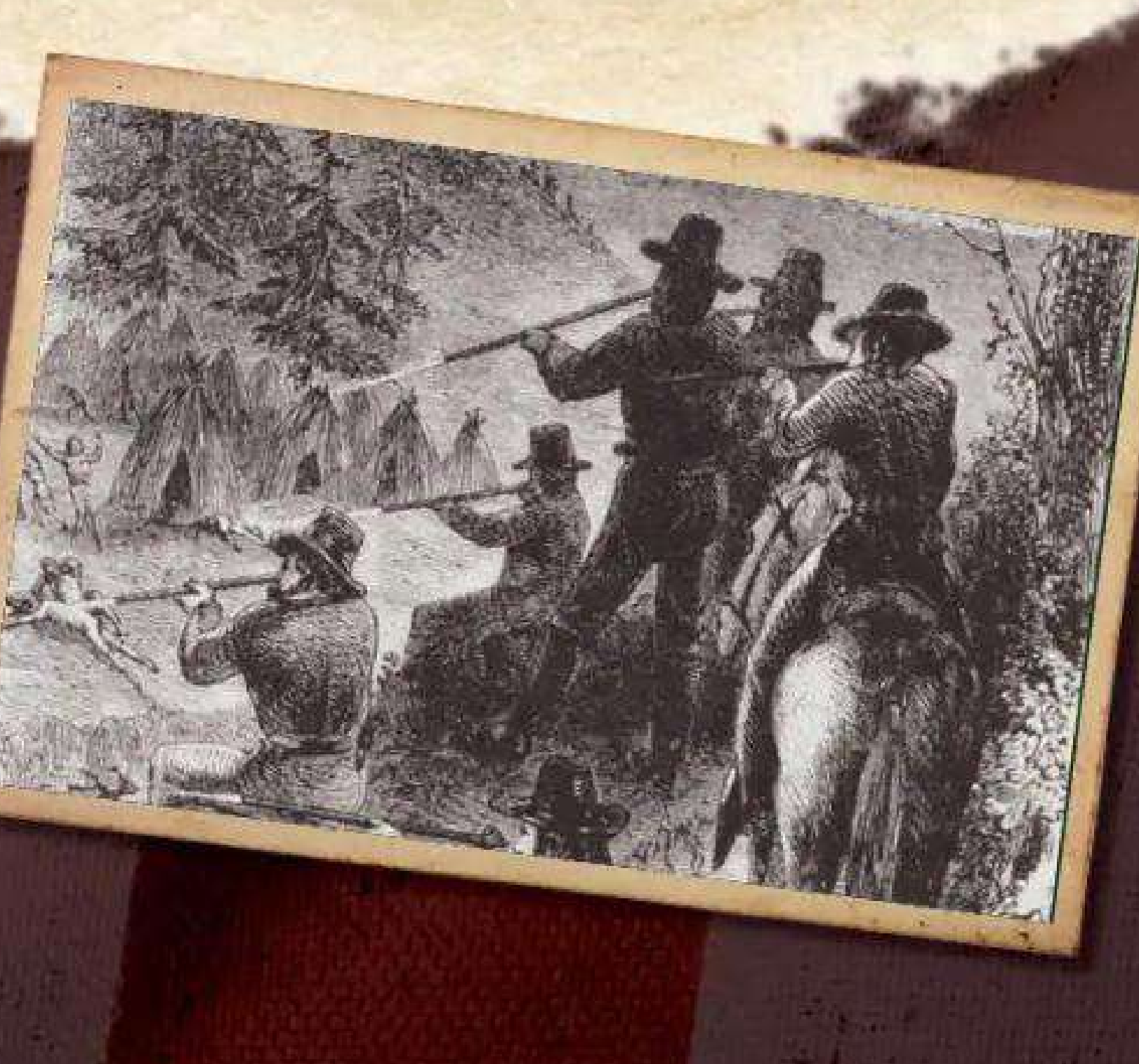

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